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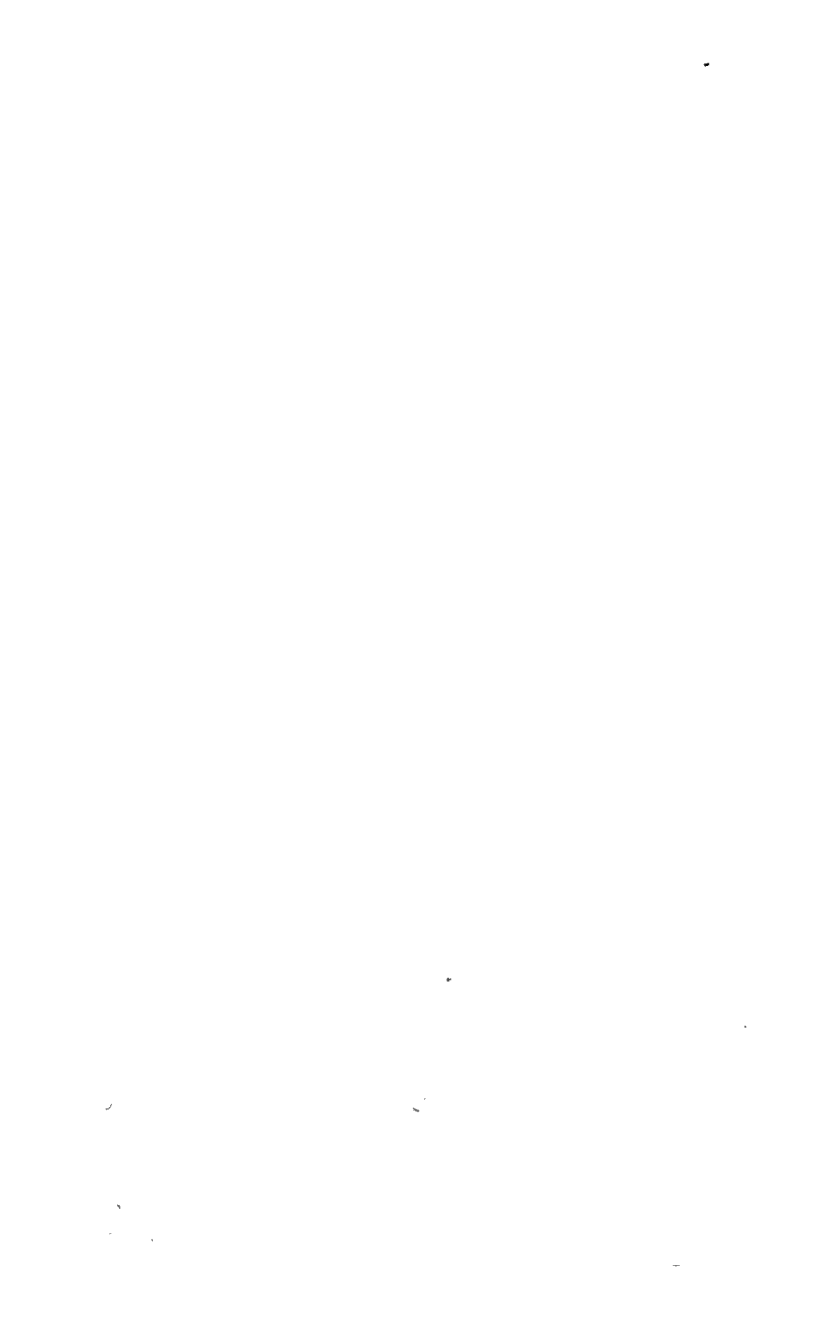
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ASCANIO.

BY
ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

BOSTON:
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.
1905.



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

“NEVER perhaps,” says Miss Pardoe (in the Preface to the “Court and Reign of Francis I.”), “did the reign of any European sovereign present so many and such varying phases. A contest for empire, a captive monarch, a female regency, and a religious war; the poisoned bowl and the burning pile alike doing their work of death amid scenes of uncalculating splendor and unbridled dissipation; the atrocities of bigotry and intolerance, blent with the most unblushing licentiousness and the most undisguised profligacy;—such are the materials offered to the student by the times of Francis I.”

The period thus characterized is that in which the scene of the present romance is laid, and although the plot is mainly concerned with the fortunes of others than subjects of the *Roi Chevalier*, we are treated to a succession of vivid pictures of life and manners at the French court and in the French capital.

The author depicts the king rather as he appeared to the world before what has been called the "legend of the Roi Chevalier," — that is to say, the long prevailing idea that François I. was the most chivalrous monarch who ever sat upon a European throne, — had been modified by the independent researches of those who have not feared to go behind the writings of the old and well tutored chroniclers whose works have formed the basis of most modern histories, — chroniclers who seem to have been guided by Cardinal Richelieu's famous remark to an aspiring historian, apropos of certain animadversions upon the character of Louis XI., that "it is treason to discuss the actions of a king who has been dead only two centuries."

The result of these researches is thus summed up by Miss Pardoe in the same Preface: —

"The glorious day of Marignano saw the rising, and that of Pavia the setting, of his fame as a soldier; so true it is that the prowess of the man was shamed by that of the boy. The early and unregretted death of one of his neglected queens, and the heart-broken endurance of the other, contrasted with the unbounded influence of his first favorite and the insolent arrogance of his second, will sufficiently demonstrate his character as a husband. His open and illegal oppression of an

overtaxed and suffering people to satisfy the cravings of an extortionate and licentious court, will suffice to disclose his value as a monarch; while the reckless indifference with which he falsified his political pledges, abandoned his allies in their extremity in order to further his own interests, and sacrificed the welfare of his kingdom and the safety of his armies to his own puerile vanity, will complete a picture by no means calculated to elicit one regret that his reign was not prolonged."

Victor Hugo dared to puncture the "legend," when, in the play of "*Le Roi s'Amuse*," he represented the "knightly king" as being enticed to a low water-side hovel by the charms of a girl of the street; but even the government of the Citizen King, Louis-Philippe, could not brook such an attack upon the "divinity that doth hedge a king," and, after the first performance in 1832, the strong hand of the censorship was laid upon the play, and fifty years elapsed before it again saw the light upon the stage.

The first titular favorite of King François, the Comtesse de Châteaubriand, whose character was in every respect diametrically opposed to that of her successor, was an object of dislike and dread to Louise de Savoie, the king's mother, because of her unbounded influence over François. When he returned to France, after his captivity in Spain

following upon his defeat at Pavia, his passion for Madame de Châteaubriand was found to have increased rather than diminished. In looking about for some means to kill this passion, and in that way put an end to the influence of the favorite, Louise de Savoie was not obliged to go beyond the lovely and licentious circle of her own maids of honor. She found in Anne de Pisseleu, Made-moiselle d'Heilly, that combination of loveliness, youth, frailty, and forwardness which she required for her purpose, and so arranged her first presentation to the king that the desired effect was produced almost immediately. It was not long before a suitably complaisant husband was found for the new divinity, in the person of the Duc d'Etampes, and she had soon entirely supplanted Madame de Châteaubriand, driven her from court, and entered upon a period of queenly power and magnificence, which was to endure with little change or diminution for full twenty years, and until the death of her royal lover and slave in 1547.

“His excessive passion for the artful favorite blinded him to her vices,” says Miss Pardoe. “Already had she taught him that her love was to be retained only by an entire devotion; and even while he suffered her to become the arbiter of his own actions, she betrayed him with a recklessness as bold as it was degrading. Nothing, moreover,

could satisfy her rapacity; and while distress, which amounted almost to famine, oppressed the lower classes of the citizens, she greedily seized upon every opportunity of enriching herself and aggrandizing her family.”¹

The following passage from the same interesting and painstaking work, if compared with the episode in “*Ascanio*” of Madame d’Etampes’s designs upon Colombe, will serve to illustrate the extreme fidelity to historical truth, even in what may seem to be minor matters, which so amply justifies the title of “*Historical Romances*” as applied to this and many other of Dumas’s works:—

“We pass over, for obvious reasons, the minor influences, each perhaps insignificant in itself, but in the aggregate fearfully mischievous, which were exercised by the fair and frail maids of honor, each, or nearly each, being in her turn the ‘*Cynthia of the minute*,’ and more than one of whom owed her temporary favor to the Duchesse d’Etampes herself, whose secret intrigues and undisguised ambition absorbed more of her time than could have been left at her disposal, had she not provided the inconstant but exacting monarch with some new object of interest; and the tact with which she selected these facile beauties was not one of the

¹ The Court and Reign of Francis I., King of France, Vol. II. Chap. XI.

least of her talents. Never, upon any occasion, did she direct the attention of the king to a woman whose intellect might have secured, after the spell of her beauty had ceased to attract him. The young and the lovely were her victims only when their youth and their loveliness were their sole attractions. She was ever ready to supply her royal lover with a new mistress, but never with a friend, a companion, or a counsellor; and then, as she had rightly foreseen, the French Sardanapalus soon became sated by the mere prettiness of his female satellites, and returned to his allegiance to herself, weaned, and more her slave than ever.”¹

A curious parallel in this regard may be noted between the course of the Duchesse d’Etampes and the similar one pursued by Madame de Pompadour, two centuries later, to maintain her power over the prematurely aged Louis XV. The policy of this “minister in petticoats” was embodied in the institution of the famous, or infamous, *Parc-aux-Cerfs*.

The request of the Emperor Charles V. to be allowed to pass through France on his way to chastise the rebellious people of Ghent, and the conflicting emotions to which it gave rise at the French court, have been much discussed by historians. It seems to have been the case that the Connétable

¹ Miss Pardoe, Vol. III. Chap. I.

Anne de Montmorency — then in the prime of life, and whom readers of the “Two Dianas” will remember in his old age as the loser of the battle of Saint-Laurent, and the favored rival of King Henri II. in the affections of Diane de Poitiers — was the only one of the king’s advisers who opposed requiring Charles to give sureties of his peaceable intentions, and to declare in writing that he traversed France only upon sufferance. The constable’s advice was adopted, notwithstanding the opposition of Madame d’Etampes, who strongly urged the king to take revenge for his own imprisonment at Madrid by improving the opportunity to inflict the same treatment upon his life-long rival and adversary. The incident of Triboulet, the jester, and the tablets upon which he inscribed the names of the greatest fools in the world, is historical.

The anecdote of the presentation of the diamond ring by the Emperor to the favorite is told by Miss Pardoe substantially as by Dumas, but it is rejected by most historians of the time. There is no question, however, that the duchess was so alarmed by the condition of the king’s health, which was prematurely impaired by his dissolute life, and so apprehensive of her own fate when he should be succeeded by the Dauphin Henri, then a willing slave to the charms of her bitter enemy, Diane de

Poitiers, that she exerted herself to the utmost to win the affection of the young Duc d'Orléans, and to procure some sort of an independent government for him. All her plans in that direction were defeated by that prince's death of the plague in 1545.

The dazzling and voluptuous Diane de Poitiers, mistress of two kings of France, the beautiful and accomplished, but cruel and treacherous Catherine de Medicis, wife of one and mother of three, are familiar historical characters, with whom Dumas has dealt more fully in others of his works.

The learned and accomplished author of the "Heptameron," Marguerite de Valois, Queen of Navarre and sister of François I., of whom we obtain a fleeting glimpse or two, is in many respects the most attractive personality of the time. It is a cause for deep regret, however, that her great affection for her brother did not lead her to exert her undoubted influence over him to a better end.

As we pass from the king and his immediate circle, to glance for a moment at the other characters, with whom and with certain passages in their lives the romance before us is mainly concerned, we venture to quote once more the same author so copiously quoted heretofore : —

"One merit must, however, be conceded to Anne

de Pisseleu; and as throughout her whole career we have been unable to trace any other good quality which she possessed, it cannot be passed over in silence. Educated highly for the period, she loved study for its own sake, and afforded protection to men of letters; although it must be admitted that, wherever her passions or vanity were brought into play, she abandoned them and their interests without hesitation or scruple. Nevertheless it is certain that she co-operated, not only willingly, but even zealously, with the king, in attracting to the court of France all the distinguished talent of Europe.”¹

The favorite's passions and vanity were brought into play in the case of Benvenuto Cellini, and she certainly abandoned him and his interests without hesitation or scruple.

The principal source whence our knowledge of this extraordinary man is drawn, is his own Autobiography, which has been several times translated into English, most recently by that eminent author and critic, the late John Addington Symonds.

The following extracts from the translator's scholarly Introduction will serve a useful purpose in that they will show that the picture drawn of him by Dumas is in no sense exaggerated, and that he really possessed the extraordinary character-

¹ Miss Pardoe, Vol. II. Chap. XI.

istics attributed to him in the following pages, and which would seem almost incredible without some confirmatory evidence : —

“ A book which the great Goethe thought worthy of translating into German with the pen of ‘ Faust ’ and ‘ Wilhelm Meister,’ a book which Auguste Comte placed upon his very limited list for the perusal of reformed humanity, is one with which we have the right to be occupied, not once or twice, but over and over again.

.

“ No one was less introspective than this child of the Italian Renaissance. No one was less occupied with thoughts about thinking or with the presentation of psychological experience. Vain, ostentatious, self-laudatory, and self-engrossed as Cellini was, he never stopped to analyze himself. . . . The word ‘ confessions ’ could not have escaped his lips ; a *Journal Intime* would have been incomprehensible to his fierce, virile spirit. His Autobiography is the record of action and passion. Suffering, enjoying, enduring, working with restless activity ; hating, loving, hovering from place to place as impulse moves him ; the man presents himself dramatically by his deeds and spoken words, never by his ponderings or meditative broodings.

“ In addition to these solid merits, his life, as Horace Walpole put it, is ‘ more amusing than

any novel.' We have a real man to deal with, — a man so realistically brought before us that we seem to hear him speak and see him move; a man, moreover, whose eminently characteristic works of art in a great measure still survive among us. Yet the adventures of this potent human actuality will bear comparison with those of *Gil Blas*, or the *Comte de Monte Cristo*, or *Quentin Durward*, or *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, for their variety and pungent interest.

.
“But what was the man himself? It is just this question which I have half promised to answer, implying that, as a translator, I have some special right to speak upon the subject.

“Well, then: I seem to know Cellini first of all as a man possessed by intense, absorbing egotism; violent, arrogant, self-assertive, passionate; conscious of great gifts for art, physical courage, and personal address. . . . To be self-reliant in all circumstances; to scheme and strike, if need be, in support of his opinion or his right; to take the law into his own hands for the redress of injury or insult; — this appeared to him the simple duty of an honorable man. . . . He possessed the temperament of a born artist, blent in almost equal proportions with that of a born bravo. Throughout the whole of his tumultuous career these two

strains contended in his nature for mastery. Upon the verge of fifty-six, when a man's blood has generally cooled, we find that he was released from prison on bail, and bound over to keep the peace for a year with some enemy whose life was probably in danger; and when I come to speak about his homicides, it will be obvious that he enjoyed killing live men quite as much as casting bronze statues.

.

“He consistently poses as an injured man, whom malevolent scoundrels and malignant stars conspired to persecute. Nor does he do this with any bad faith. His belief in himself remained firm as adamant, and he candidly conceived that he was under the special providence of a merciful and loving God, who appreciated his high and virtuous qualities.”

Bearing in mind that all the seemingly fabulous anecdotes related of Cellini, or put into his own mouth, by Dumas, are actually told by himself in his Autobiography, the conclusions of Mr. Symonds as to the artist's veracity cannot fail to be interesting:—

“Among Cellini's faults I do not reckon either baseness or lying. He was not a rogue, and he meant to be veracious. This contradicts the commonplace and superficial view of his character

so flatly that I must support my opinion at some length. Of course I shall not deny that a fellow endowed with such overweening self-conceit, when he comes to write about himself, will set down much which cannot be taken entirely on trust. . . . Men of his stamp are certain to exaggerate their own merits, and to pass lightly over things not favorable to the ideal they present. But this is very different from lying; and of calculated mendacity Cellini stands almost universally accused. I believe that view to be mistaken."

Passing from general considerations to particular instances of Cellini's alleged falsehoods, the learned translator proceeds to discuss at some length many of the miraculous experiences and remarkable statements of Cellini, which are to be found in these volumes. For example, the founding of Florence by an imaginary ancestor of his own, named Fiorino da Cellino, a captain in the army of Julius Cæsar; and his claim that he shot the Constable of Bourbon from the ramparts of Rome in 1527, as to which Mr. Symonds says: "Bourbon had been shot dead in the assault of Rome upon that foggy morning, and Cellini had certainly discharged his arquebuse from the ramparts. . . . If it were possible to put his thoughts about this event into a syllogism, it would run as follows: 'Somebody shot Bourbon; I shot somebody; being what I am,

I am inclined to think the somebody I shot was Bourbon."

It would be a much simpler task to make a list of the fictitious characters and incidents in "Ascanio," than to enumerate those whose existence or occurrence is well authenticated. Colombe and her governess are apparently creations of the novelist's brain, and the same is true of Hermann, little Jehan, Jacques Aubry and his light o' love. The Provost of Paris was Jean d'Estouteville, not Robert d'Estourville; but he was actually in possession of the Petit-Nesle, which was the abode granted to Benvenuto by a deed which is still extant, as are the letters of naturalization bestowed upon him. The trouble experienced by Cellini in obtaining possession of the Petit-Nesle is considerably overdrawn, and it does not appear that Ascanio was ever imprisoned. Ascanio's character throughout is represented in a different light from that in which it appears in the Autobiography, although he is there said to be "a lad of marvellous talents, and, moreover, so fair of person that every one who once set eyes on him seemed bound to love him beyond measure." Benvenuto had much trouble with him, and used continually to beat him; and he was very wroth when he found that his apprentice had been using the head of the mammoth statue of Mars as a trysting place, where he was accustomed to meet

a frail damsel of his acquaintance. Benvenuto tells the story of the injury to the hand of Raffaello del Moro's daughter, and of his own share in her cure; but the element of romance is altogether wanting in his own narrative of the relations between himself and that "very beautiful" young woman.

Catherine and Scozzone (Scorzzone) were two women, not one, both models and ephemeral mistresses of the artist. The episode of the amours of Pagolo and Catherine is a very much softened version of an almost unreadable passage in the memoirs. Of the episode itself, as told by Cellini, Mr. Symonds says that it is one over which his biographers would willingly draw the veil.

It is impossible to imagine a more natural consequence of Benvenuto's peculiar temperament than his absolute failure to make himself *persona grata* to the arrogant, self-seeking mistress of the King of France. François was oftentimes hard put to it to reconcile his admiration for the work of the artist with his desire to please the favorite; but in presence of one of his masterpieces the former sentiment generally carried the day, — notably on the occasion of the exhibition of the Jupiter at Fontainebleau, in competition with the antique statues brought from Rome by Primaticcio. After describing the scene in the gallery substantially as it is

described in the novel, Cellini says: "The king departed sooner than he would otherwise have done," (on account of the rage of the duchess,) "calling aloud, however, to encourage me, 'I have brought from Italy the greatest man who ever lived, endowed with all the talents.'"

A passage in Mr. Symonds's Introduction to the Life, too long to be quoted here, shows that Benvenuto left France somewhat under a cloud, and followed by suspicions of dishonest dealing, which have never been quite satisfactorily cleared away.

Enough has been said to show that in this book, as always in his historical romances, Dumas has substantially rewritten a chapter of history, — for the visit of Benvenuto Cellini to Paris has been deemed worthy of notice at considerable length by more than one grave chronicler; and he has again demonstrated his very exceptional power of interweaving history and fiction in such a way as to make each embellish the other.

LIST OF CHARACTERS.

Period, 1540.

FRANÇOIS I., King of France.

ELEANORA, his queen, sister to Charles V.

THE DAUPHIN, afterwards Henri II.

CHARLES D'ORLÉANS, the king's second son.

THE DAUPHINE, Catherine de Medicis.

THE EMPEROR CHARLES V.

THE KING OF NAVARRE.

MARGUERITE DE VALOIS, Queen of Navarre.

ANNE DE PISSELEU, Duchesse d'Etampes, favorite of François I

DIANE DE POITIERS.

BENVENUTO CELLINI, a Florentine artist.

• ASCANIO, his pupil.

MESSIRE ROBERT D'ESTOURVILLE, Provost of Paris.

COLOMBE, his daughter.

COMTE D'ORBEC, the king's treasurer.

VICOMTE DE MARMAGNE, a suitor for Colombe's hand.

THE DUKE OF MEDINA-SIDONIA, ambassador of Charles V.

MONSIEUR DE MONTBRION, governor of Charles d'Orléans.

CONSTABLE ANNE DE MONTMORENCY,

CHANCELLOR POYET,

CARDINAL DE TOURNON,

MESSIRE ANTOINE LE MAÇON,

COMTE DE LA FAYE,

MARQUIS DES PRÉS,

MELIN DE SAINT-GELAIS,

M. DE TERMES,

HENRI D'ESTIENNE,

PIETRO STROZZI, a Florentine refugee.

} of the French Court.

LIST OF CHARACTERS.

TRIBOULET, the king's jester.

FRANÇOIS RABELAIS.

CLEMENT MAROT.

PAGOLO,

JEHAN,

SIMON LE-GAUCHER,

HERMANN,

} assistants of Cellini.

SCOZZONE, Cellini's model.

RUPERTA, servant to Cellini.

DAME PERRINE, Colombe's governess.

PULCHERIA, her assistant.

MASTER JACQUES, Messire d'Estourville's gardener.

ISABEAU, attendant of Madame d'Etampes.

ANDRÉ, physician to Madame d'Etampes.

JACQUES AUBRY, a student, attaching himself to the service of Cellini.

GERVAISE-PERRETTE POPINOT, a grisette.

FRANCESCO PRIMATICCIO, a painter, friend to Cellini.

GUIDO, a Florentine physician.

FERRANTE,

FRACASSO,

PROCOPE,

MALEDENT,

} bravos employed by Vicomte de Marmagne.

THE LIEUTENANT CRIMINAL OF THE PALAIS DE JUSTICE.

MARC-BONIFACE GRIMOINEAU, his clerk.

ETIENNE RAYMOND, a prisoner at the Châtelet.

A PRIEST AT THE CHÂTELET.

POPE CLEMENT VII.

MASTER GEORGIO, governor of the Castle of San Angelo.

MONSIEUR DE MONTLUC, French ambassador at Rome.

POMPEO, a goldsmith at Rome.

RAPHAEL DEL MORO, a Florentine goldsmith.

STEFANA, his daughter.

GISMONDO GADDI, a confrère of Del Moro.

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Drawn by E. Van Nudten.

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ASCANIO.

I.

THE STREET AND THE STUDIO.

TIME, four o'clock in the afternoon of the tenth day of July in the year of grace 1540. Place, the entrance to the church Des Grands Augustins, within the precincts of the University, by the receptacle for holy water near the door.

A tall, handsome youth, olive-skinned, with long waving locks and great black eyes, simply but elegantly clad, his only weapon a little dagger with a hilt of marvellous workmanship, was standing there, and, doubtless from motives of pure piety and humility, had not stirred from the spot throughout the vespers service. With head bowed in an attitude of devout contemplation, he was murmuring beneath his breath I know not what words, — his prayers let us hope, — for he spoke so low that none but himself and God could hear what he might say. As the service drew near its close, however, he raised his voice slightly, and they who stood nearest him could hear these half-audible words: —

“How wretchedly these French monks drone out their psalms! Could they not sing more melodiously before her, whose ear should be accustomed to angels’ voices?”

Ah ! this is well ; the vespers are at an end at last. Mon Dieu ! mon Dieu ! grant that I be more fortunate to-day than on last Sunday, and that she do at least raise her eyes to my face ! ”

This last prayer was most artful, in very truth ; for if she to whom it was addressed should chance to raise her eyes to the suppliant’s face, she would see the most adorable youthful head that she had ever seen in dreams, while reading the clever mythological tales which were so fashionable at the time, by virtue of the charming couplets of Master Clement Marot, and which told of the loves of Psyche and the death of Narcissus. Indeed, beneath his simple sober-hued costume, the youth whom we have introduced to our readers was remarkably handsome, and wore an air of unmistakable refinement : moreover, his smile was infinitely sweet and attractive, and his glance, which dared not yet be bold, was as ardent and impassioned as ever flashed from the great speaking eyes of eighteen years.

Meanwhile, upon hearing the movement of many chairs announcing the end of the service, our lover, — for the reader will have discovered from the few words he has uttered that he is entitled to be so described, — our lover, I say, drew aside a little, and watched the congregation pass silently forth, — a congregation composed of staid church-wardens, respectable matrons past their giddy days, and prepossessing damsels. But for none of these had the youth come thither, for his glance did not brighten, nor did he step impulsively forward, until he saw approach a maiden dressed in white, and attended by a duenna, — a duenna of high station, be it understood, — who seemed accustomed to the ways of society, a duenna not unyouthful nor unattractive, and by no means savage in appearance. When the two ladies approached the

basin of holy water, our youth took some of the liquid and gallantly offered it to them.

The duenna bestowed the most gracious of smiles and most grateful of courtesies upon him, and even touched his fingers as she took the cup, which, to his great chagrin, she herself handed to her companion ; but the latter, notwithstanding the fervent prayer whereof she had been the object a few moments before, kept her eyes constantly upon the ground, — a sure proof that she knew the comely youth was there, — so that the comely youth, when she had passed, stamped upon the flags, muttering, “Alas! again she did not see me.” An equally sure proof that the comely youth was, as we have said, no more than eighteen years old.

But after the first burst of vexation, our unknown hastened down the steps of the church, and, seeing that the absent-minded beauty, having lowered her veil and taken her attendant’s arm, had turned to the right, hastened to take the same direction, observing that his own home chanced to lie that way. The maiden followed the quay as far as Pont Saint-Michel, and crossed Pont Saint-Michel ; still it was our hero’s road. She next passed through Rue de la Barillerie, and crossed Pont au Change ; and as she was still pursuing our hero’s road, our hero followed her like her shadow.

Every pretty girl’s shadow is a lover.

But alas! when she reached the Grand Châtelet, the lovely star, whereof our unknown had made himself the satellite, was suddenly eclipsed : the wicket of the royal prison opened the instant that the duenna knocked, and closed again behind them.

The young man was taken aback for a moment ; but as he was a very decided fellow when there was no pretty girl at hand to weaken his resolution, he very soon made up his mind what course to pursue.

A sergeant, pike on shoulder, was walking sedately back and forth before the door of the Châtelet. Our youthful unknown followed the example of the worthy sentinel, and, having walked on a short distance to avoid observation, but not so far as to lose sight of the door, he heroically began his amorous sentry-go.

If the reader has ever done sentry duty in the course of his life, he must have noticed that one of the surest means of making the time pass quickly is to commune with one's self. Our hero doubtless was accustomed to such duty, for he had hardly begun his promenade when he addressed the following monologue to himself:—

“Assuredly it cannot be that she lives in yonder prison. This morning after mass, and these last two Sundays when I dared not follow her save with my eyes, — dullard that I was! — she turned not to the right upon the quay, but to the left, toward the Porte de Nesle, and the Pré-aux-Clercs. What the devil brings her to the Châtelet? What can it be? To see a prisoner, perhaps, her brother 't is most like. Poor girl! she must suffer cruelly, for doubtless she is as sweet and kind as she is lovely. Pardieu! I'm sorely tempted to accost her, ask her frankly who it is, and offer my services. If it be her brother, I'll tell the patron the whole story, and ask his advice. When one has escaped from the Castle of San Angelo, as he has, one has a shrewd idea of the best way to get out of prison. There's no more to be said: I'll save her brother. After I have rendered him such a service, he'll be my friend for life and death. Of course he'll ask me then what he can do for me when I have done so much for him. Then I'll confess that I love his sister. He'll present me to her, and then we'll see if she won't raise her eyes.”

Once launched upon such a course, we need not say how

a lover's thoughts flow on unchecked. Thus it was that our youth was vastly amazed to hear the clock strike four, and see the sentinel relieved.

The new sergeant began his promenade, and the young man resumed his. His method of passing time had succeeded too well for him not to continue to make use of it; so he resumed his discourse upon a theme no less fruitful of ideas than the other:—

“How lovely she is! how graceful every movement! how modest her bearing! how classic the outline of her features! There is in the whole world no other than Leonardo da Vinci or the divine Raphael, worthy to reproduce the image of that chaste and spotless being; nor would they prove equal to the task, save at the very zenith of their talent. O mon Dieu! why am not I a painter, rather than a sculptor, worker in enamel, or goldsmith? First of all, were I a painter, there'd be no need that I should have her before my eyes to make her portrait. I should never cease to see her great blue eyes, her beautiful blonde tresses, her pearly skin and slender form. Were I a painter, I should paint her face in every picture, as Sanzio did with Fornarina, and Andrea del Sarto with Lucrezia. And what a contrast betwixt her and Fornarina! in sooth, neither the one nor the other is worthy to unloose her shoe laces. In the first place, Fornarina —”

The youth was not at the end of his comparisons, which were, as the reader will imagine, uniformly to the advantage of his inamorata, when the hour struck.

The second sentinel was relieved.

“Six o'clock! 'Tis strange how the time flies!” muttered the youth, “and if it flies thus quickly while I wait for her, how should it be if I were by her side! Ah! by her side I should lose count of time; I should be in

paradise. If I were by her side, I should but look at her, and so the hours and days and months would pass. What a blissful life that would be, *mon Dieu!*" and the young man lost himself in an ecstatic reverie; for his mistress, though absent, seemed to pass in person before his eyes, — the eyes of a true artist.

The third sentinel was relieved.

Eight o'clock struck on all the parish churches, and the shades of night began to fall, for all authorities are in accord that the twilight hour in July three hundred years ago was in the neighborhood of eight o'clock, as now; but what is perhaps more astonishing than that is the fabulous perseverance of a sixteenth century lover. All passions were ardent in those days, and vigorous young hearts no more stopped short in love than in art or war.

However, the patience of the young artist — for he has let us into the secret of his profession — was rewarded at last, when he saw the ponderous door of the *Châtelet* open for the twentieth time, but this time to give passage to her for whom he was waiting. The same chaperon was still at her side, and furthermore, two archers of the provost's guard followed ten paces behind her, as escort.

They retraced the steps they had taken four hours earlier, to wit the Pont au Change, Rue de la Barillerie, Pont Saint-Michel, and the quays; but they kept on by the Grands Augustins, and some three hundred yards beyond paused before a huge door in a recess in the wall, beside which was another smaller door for the servants' use. The duenna knocked at the great door, which was opened by the porter. The two archers, after saluting their charge with the utmost respect, returned to the *Châtelet*, and our artist found himself standing for the second time outside a closed door.

He would probably have remained there until morning, for he was fairly embarked on the fourth series of his dreams ; but chance willed that a passer by, who had imbibed something too freely, collided violently with him.

"Hola there, friend !" said the new arrival, " by your leave, are you a man or a post ? If so be you're a post, you're within your rights and I respect you ; but if you be a man, stand back, and let me pass."

"Pray pardon me," rejoined the distraught youth, "but I am a stranger in this good city of Paris, and —"

"Oh ! that's another matter ; the Frenchman is always hospitable, and I ask your pardon ; you're a stranger, good. As you have told me who you are, it's only fair that I should tell you who I am. I am a student, and my name is —"

"Excuse me," interposed the young artist, "but before I know who you are, I would be very glad to know where I am."

"Porte de Nesle, my dear friend ; this is the Hôtel de Nesle," said the student, with a glance at the great door from which the stranger had not once removed his eyes.

"Very good ; and to reach Rue Saint-Martin, where I live, which direction must I take ?" said our lovelorn youth, for the sake of saying something, and hoping thus to be rid of his companion.

"Rue Saint-Martin, do you say ? Come with me, I'm going that way, and at Pont Saint-Michel I'll show you how you must go. As I was saying, I am a student, I am returning from the Pré-aux-Clercs, and my name is —"

"Do you know to whom the Hôtel de Nesle belongs ?" asked the young stranger.

"Marry! I rather think I know my University! The Hôtel de Nesle, young man, belongs to our lord, the king, and is at this moment in the hands of Robert d'Estourville, Provost of Paris."

"How say you! that the Provost of Paris lives there?"

"By no means did I tell you that the Provost of Paris lives there, my son: the Provost of Paris lives at the Grand Châtelet."

"Ah, yes! at the Grand Châtelet! Then that's the explanation. But how happens it that the provost lives at the Grand Châtelet, and yet the king leaves the Hôtel de Nesle in his possession?"

"Tis thus. The king, you see, had given the Hôtel de Nesle to our bailli, a most venerable man, who stood guard over the privileges of the University, and tried all suits against it in most paternal fashion: superb functions 'his! Unhappily our excellent bailli was so just — so just — to us, that his office was abolished two years since, upon the pretext that he used to sleep when hearing causes, as if *bailli* were not derived from *bâiller* (to yawn). His office being thus suppressed, the duty of protecting the interests of the University was intrusted to the Provost of Paris. A fine protector, on my word! as if we could not quite as well protect ourselves! Now, our said provost — dost thou follow me, my child? — our said provost, who is most rapacious, opined that, since he succeeded to the bailli's office, he ought at the same time to inherit his possessions, and so he quietly laid hold of the Grand and Petit-Nesle, thanks to the patronage of Madame d'Etampes."

"And yet, you say, he does not occupy it."

"Not he, the villain. I think, however, that the old Cassandre lodges a daughter there, or niece, a lovely child called Colombe or Colombine, or some such name, and

keeps her under lock and key in a corner of the Petit Nesle."

"Ah! is it so?" exclaimed the artist, hardly able to breathe, for it was the first time that he had heard his mistress's name; "this usurpation seems to me a shocking abuse. What! this vast hotel to shelter one young girl with her duenna!"

"Whence comest thou, O stranger, not to know that nothing comes to pass more naturally than this abuse, — that we poor clerks should live six together in a wretched garret, while a great nobleman casts this immense property with its gardens, lawns, and tennis-court to the dogs!"

"Ah! there is a tennis-court!"

"Magnificent, my son! magnificent!"

"But this Hôtel de Nesle, you say, is actually the property of King François I."

"To be sure: but what would you have King François I. do with this property of his?"

"Why, give it to others, as the provost doesn't occupy it."

"Very good: then go and ask it of him for yourself."

"Why not? Tell me, does the game of tennis please your fancy?"

"I fairly dote on it."

"In that case I invite you to a game with me next Sunday."

"Where, pray?"

"At the Hôtel de Nesle."

"Gramercy! my lord grand master of the royal châteaux! 'Tis meet that you should know my name at least —"

But as the young stranger knew all that he cared to

know, and as the rest probably interested him but little, he heard not a word of his new friend's story, as he proceeded to tell him in detail that his name was Jacques Aubry, that he was a scrivener at the University, and was now returning from the Pré-aux-Clercs, where he had had an assignation with his tailor's wife ; that she, detained no doubt by her wrathful spouse, did not appear ; that he had consoled himself for Simonne's absence by drinking good Suresne ; and, lastly, that he proposed to withdraw his custom from the discourteous Master Snip, who compelled him to wear himself out with waiting, and to get tipsy, which was altogether opposed to all his habits.

When the two young men reached Rue de la Harpe, Jacques Aubry pointed out to our unknown the road he was to follow, which he knew even better than his informant : they then made an appointment for the following Sunday at noon at the Porte de Nesle, and parted, one singing, the other dreaming.

He who dreamed had abundant food for dreaming, for he had learned more during that one evening than in the three weeks preceding.

He had learned that the maiden to whom he had given his heart, lived at the Petit-Nesle, that she was the daughter of Messire Robert d'Estourville, Provost of Paris, and that her name was Colombe. As will be seen, he had not wasted his day.

Still dreaming he turned into Rue Saint-Martin, and stopped before a handsome house, over the door of which were carved the arms of the Cardinal of Ferrara. He knocked three times.

"Who's there?" demanded a fresh, resonant young voice from within, after an interval of a few seconds.

"I, Dame Catherine," replied the unknown.

"Who are you?"

“Ascanio.”

“Ah ! at last !”

The door opened, and Ascanio entered.

A charming girl of some eighteen to twenty years, rather dark, rather small, very quick of movement, and admirably well shaped withal, welcomed him with transports of joy.

“Here’s the deserter ! here he is !” she cried, and ran, or rather bounded on before, to announce him, extinguishing the lamp she carried, and leaving open the street door, which Ascanio, less giddy-pated than she, was careful to secure.

The young man, although Dame Catherine’s precipitation left him in darkness, walked with assured step across a courtyard of considerable size, in which every tale was surrounded by a border of rank weeds, the whole dominated by a sombre mass of tall buildings of somewhat severe aspect. It was the frowning and humid dwelling-place of a cardinal, although its master had not for a long time dwelt therein.

Ascanio sprang lightly up a flight of moss-grown steps, and entered a vast hall, the only room in the house that was lighted, — a sort of conventual refectory, ordinarily dark and gloomy and untenanted, but which for two months past had been filled with light and life and music.

For two months past, in truth, this cold colossal cell had been instinct with bustling, laughing, good-humored life ; for two months past, ten work-benches, two anvils, and an improvised forge had seemed to lessen the size of the vast room ; sketches, models, benches laden with pincers, hammers, and files, sheaves of swords with chased hilts of marvellous workmanship, and carved open-work blades, helmets, cuirasses, and bucklers, gold-embossed,

whereon the loves of the gods and goddesses were portrayed in relief, as if to turn the mind away from the purpose for which they were destined to be used, had covered the grayish walls. The sun had freely found its way in through the wide-open windows, and the air had been filled with the songs of joyous, active workers.

A cardinal's refectory had become a goldsmith's workshop.

However, during this evening of July 10, 1540, the sanctity of the Sabbath had temporarily restored to the newly enlivened apartment the tranquillity in which it had lain dormant for a century. But a table, upon which the remains of an excellent supper lay about in confusion, lighted by a lamp which one would take to have been stolen from the ruins of Pompeii, of so chaste and delicate a form was it, proved that, if the temporary occupants of the cardinal's mansion did sometimes enjoy repose, they were in no wise addicted to fasting.

When Ascanio entered there were four persons in the workshop.

These four persons were an old maid servant, who was removing the dishes from the table, Catherine, who was relighting the lamp, a young man sketching in a corner, and waiting for the lamp which Catherine had taken from before him in order to continue his work, and the master, standing with folded arms, and leaning against the forge.

The last would inevitably have been the first to be observed by any one entering the workshop.

Indeed, there was an indescribable impression of life and power which emanated from this remarkable personage, and attracted the attention even of those who would have chosen to withhold it. He was a tall, spare, powerful man of some forty years; but it would have needed

the chisel of Michel-Angelo or the pencil of Ribeira to trace the outline of that clear-cut profile, to reproduce that sparkling olive complexion, to depict that bold, almost kingly expression. His lofty forehead towered above eyebrows quick to frown; his straight-forward piercing glance flashed at times with a light that was almost sublime; his frank, good-humored smile, albeit somewhat satirical, fascinated and awed you at the same time; he was accustomed to stroke his black beard and moustache with his hand, which was not precisely small, but nervous, supple, with long fingers and great strength, but withal slender and aristocratic; lastly, in his way of looking at you, speaking, turning his head, in all his quick, expressive, but not intemperate gestures, even in the careless attitude in which he was standing when Ascanio entered, his strength made itself felt; the lion in repose was none the less the lion.

Catherine and the apprentice working in the corner formed a most striking contrast to each other. The latter, a sombre, taciturn fellow, with a narrow forehead already furrowed with wrinkles, half shut eyes, and compressed lips; she as blithe as a bird and blooming as a flower, with the most mischievous of eyes always to be seen beneath her restless eyelids, and the whitest of teeth within her mouth, constantly half opened with a smile. The apprentice, buried in his corner, was slow and languid in his movements, as if economizing his strength; Catherine was here and there, going and coming, never remaining one second in one spot, so did her youthful active organization overflow with life and spirits, and feel the need of constant movement in default of excitement.

Thus she was the fairy of the household, a very skylark by virtue of her vivacity, and her clear, piercing

note, beginning life with such a joyous disregard of everything beyond the moment as to fully justify the surname of *Scozzone* which the master had given her; an Italian word which signified then, and still signifies, something very like *casse-cou* (break-neck). And yet, with all her childish ways, Scozzone was so instinct with witchery and charm that she was the life and soul of the household; when she sang all the others were silent; when she laughed they laughed with her; when she ordered they obeyed without a word, — albeit she was not ordinarily exacting in her caprice; and then she was so frankly and innocently happy, that she diffused an atmosphere of good humor wherever she went, and it made others glad to see her gladness.

Her story was an old, old story, to which we may perhaps recur: an orphan, born of the people, she was abandoned in her infancy, but God protected her. Destined to afford pleasure to everybody, she met a man to whom she afforded pure happiness.

Having introduced these new characters, we now resume the thread of our narrative where we let it drop.

“Aha! whence comest thou, gadabout?” said the master to Ascanio.

“Whence do I come? I come from gadding about for you, master.”

“Since morning?”

“Since morning.”

“Say rather that thou hast been in quest of adventure?”

“What manner of adventure should I have been in quest of, master?” murmured Ascanio.

“How can I know, pray?”

“Well, well! and if it were so, where’s the harm?” interposed Scozzone. “Indeed, he’s a pretty boy enough

to have adventures run after him, even though he run not after adventures."

"Scozzone!" said the master with a frown.

"Come, come! don't you be jealous of him, too, poor, dear boy!" And she raised Ascanio's chin with her hand. "Ah, well! it only needed that. But, Jesu! how pale you are! Does it happen that you haven't supped, monsieur vagabond?"

"Faith, no," cried Ascanio; "I forgot it."

"Oho! in that case I take sides with the master; he forgot that he had not supped, so he must be in love. Ruperta! Ruperta! bring supper for Messire Ascanio at once."

The servant produced several dishes of appetizing relics of the evening meal, which our hero pounced upon with an appetite by no means unnatural after his prolonged exercise in the open air.

Scozzone and the master watched him, smiling the while, one with sisterly affection, the other with a father's love. The young man at work in the corner had raised his head when Ascanio entered; but as soon as Scozzone replaced in front of him the lamp she had taken when she ran to open the door, he bent his head over his work once more.

"I was saying, master, that it was for you I have been running about all day," resumed Ascanio, noticing the mischievous expression of the master and Scozzone, and desiring to lead the conversation to some other subject than his love affairs.

"How hast thou run about all day for me? Let us hear."

"Did you not say yesterday that the light was very bad here, and that you must have another studio?"

"Even so."

"Well, I have found one for you."

"Dost thou hear, Pagolo?" said the master, turning to the young man in the corner.

"What did you say, master?" he asked, raising his head a second time.

"Come, lay aside thy work a moment, and listen to this. He has found a workshop: dost thou hear?"

"Pardon, master, but I can hear very well from here what my friend Ascanio may say. I would like to complete this study; it seems to me that it is well, when one has piously fulfilled the duties of a Christian on the Sabbath day, to employ one's leisure in some profitable exercise: to work is to pray."

"Pagolo, my friend," said the master, shaking his head more in sadness than in anger, "you would do better, believe me, to work more assiduously and heartily through the week, and enjoy yourself on Sunday like a good comrade, than to idle as you do on ordinary days, and hypocritically set yourself apart from the others by feigning so much ardor in your work on fête-days; but you are your own master, act as seems good to you. And thou sayest, Ascanio, my child?" he continued in a tone in which infinite gentleness and affection were mingled.

"I say that I have found a magnificent workshop for you."

"Where?"

"Do you know the Hôtel de Nesle?"

"Perfectly; that is, by having passed before it, for I have never been within the door."

"But is its exterior attractive in your eyes?"

"Pardieu! it is indeed. But —"

"But what?"

"But does no one occupy it, pray?"

"Marry, yes, Monsieur the Provost of Paris, Messire

Robert d'Estourville, who has taken possession of it without right. Moreover, to satisfy your scruples on that head, we might with great propriety leave him the Petit-Nesle, where some one of his family now dwells, I think, and be content ourselves with the Grand-Nesle, and its courtyards, lawns, and bowling-greens and tennis-court."

"There is a tennis-court?"

"Finer than that of Santa-Croce at Florence."

"Per Bacco! and it is my favorite game; thou didst know that, Ascanio."

"Yes; and then, master, over and above all that, a superb location; air everywhere; and such air! perfect country air, and not such as we get here in this infernal corner, where we are moulding, forgotten by the sun. The Pré-aux-Clercs on one side, the Seine on the other, and the king, your great king, only two steps away, in his Louvre."

"But whose is this devil of a hotel?"

"Whose, say you? Pardieu! the king's."

"The king's! Say me that once more, my child, — the Hôtel de Nesle is the king's!"

"His own; now it remains to ascertain if he will give you so magnificent a dwelling-place."

"Who, the king? How do men call the king, Ascanio!"

"Why, François I. if I am not mistaken."

"Which means that the Hôtel de Nesle will be my property within the week."

"But it may be that the Provost of Paris will take offence."

"What care I for that?"

"But suppose he will not let go what he has in his hand?"

"Suppose he will not!—What do men call me, Ascanio?"

"They call you Benvenuto Cellini, master."

"Which means that if the worthy provost will not do things with good grace, why, we will use force to compel him to do them. And now let us to bed. To-morrow we 'll speak further on the matter, and then the sun will shine, and we shall see more clearly."

At the master's suggestion all retired except Pagolo, who remained for some time at work in his corner; but as soon as he believed that all were safely in bed, the apprentice rose, looked about, drew near the table, and poured for himself a large cup of wine, which he swallowed at a draught. Then he too went off to bed.

II.

A GOLDSMITH OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

SINCE we have drawn the portrait and mentioned the name of Benvenuto Cellini, we crave the reader's permission, that he may the more understandingly approach the artistic subject of which we propose to treat, to indulge in a short digression upon this extraordinary man, who at this time had been living in France for two months, and who is destined to become one of the principal characters of this history.

But first of all let us say a word as to the goldsmiths of the sixteenth century.

There is at Florence a bridge called the Ponte-Vecchio, which is covered with houses to this day; these houses were in the old days goldsmiths' shops.

But the word is not to be understood as we understand it to-day. The goldsmith of our day follows a trade; formerly, the goldsmith was an artist.

So it was that there was nothing in the world so wondrously beautiful as these shops, or rather as the articles with which they were stocked. There were round cups of onyx, around which dragons' tails were twined, while heads and bodies of those fabulous creatures confronted one another with gold-bespangled sky-blue wings outspread, and with jaws wide open like chimeras, shot threatening glances from their ruby eyes. There were ewers of agate, with a festoon of

ivy clinging round the base, and climbing up in guise of handle well above the orifice, concealing amid its emerald foliage some marvellous bird from the tropics, in brilliant plumage of enamel, seemingly alive and ready to burst forth in song. There were urns of lapis-lazuli, over the edge of which leaned, as if to drink, lizards chiselled with such art that one could almost see the changing reflection of their golden cuirasses, and might have thought that they would fly at the least sound, and seek shelter in some crevice in the wall. Then there were chalices and monstrances, and bronze and gold and silver medallions, all studded with precious stones, as if in those days rubies, topazes, carbuncles, and diamonds could be found by searching in the sand on river banks, or in the dust of the highroad; and there were nymphs, naiads, gods, goddesses, a whole resplendent Olympus, mingled with crucifixes, crosses, and Calvarys; Mater Dolorosas, Venuses, Christs, Apollos, Jupiters launching thunderbolts, and Jehovahs creating the world; and all this not only cleverly executed, but poetically conceived; not only admirable, viewed as ornaments for a woman's boudoir, but magnificent masterpieces fit to immortalize the reign of a king or the genius of a nation.

To be sure, the goldsmiths of that epoch bore the names of Donatello, Ghiberti, Guirlandajo, and Benvenuto Cellini.

Now, Benvenuto Cellini has himself described in his memoirs, which are more interesting than the most interesting novel, the adventurous life of the artists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when Titian was painting in coat of mail, when Michel-Angelo was sculpturing with his sword at his side, when Masaccio and Domenichino died of poison, and Cosmo I. secluded

himself in his laboratory to discover the mode of tempering steel so that it would cut porphyry.

To show the character of the man, we will take a single episode in his life, — that which was the occasion of his coming to France.

Benvenuto was at Rome, whither Pope Clement VII. had summoned him, and was at work with characteristic ardor upon the beautiful chalice which his Holiness had ordered; but as he desired to display his talent at its best upon the precious work, he made but slow progress. Now, Benvenuto, as may well be imagined, had many rivals, who envied him the many valuable orders he received from the Pope, as well as the marvellous skill with which he executed them. The result was that one of his confrères, named Pompeo, who had nothing to do but slander his betters, took advantage of the delay to do him all possible injury in the Pope's sight, and kept at work persistently, day in and day out, without truce or relaxation, sometimes in undertones, sometimes aloud, assuring him that he would never finish it, and that he was so overwhelmed with orders that he executed those of other people to the neglect of his Holiness's.

He said and did so much, did good Pompeo, that when Benvenuto Cellini saw him enter his workshop one day with smiling face, he divined at once that he was the bearer of bad news for him.

"Well, my dear confrère," Pompeo began, "I have come to relieve you from a heavy burden. His Holiness realizes that your neglect in completing his chalice is not due to lack of zeal, but to lack of time; he therefore considers it no more than just to relieve you from some one of your important duties, and of his own motion he dismisses you from the post of Engraver to the Mint

It will be nine paltry ducats a month less in your pocket, but an hour more each day at your disposal."

Benvenuto was conscious of an intense longing to throw the jeering varlet out of window, but he restrained his feelings, and Pompeo, seeing that not a muscle of his face moved, thought that he had missed his aim.

"Furthermore," he continued, "why, I know not, but in spite of all that I could say in your behalf, his Holiness demands his chalice at once, in whatever condition it may be. Verily, I am afraid, dear Benvenuto, I say it in all friendliness, that 't is his purpose to have some other finish it."

"Oh, no, not that!" cried the goldsmith, starting up like one bitten by a serpent. "My chalice is my own, even as the office at the Mint is the Pope's. His Holiness hath no right to do more than bid me return the five hundred crowns paid to me in advance, and I will dispose of my work as may seem good to me."

"Beware, my master," said Pompeo; "imprisonment may be the sequel of your refusal."

"Signore Pompeo, your 're an ass!" retorted Benvenuto.

Pompeo left the shop in a rage.

On the following day two of the Holy Father's chamberlains called upon Benvenuto Cellini.

"The Pope has sent us," said one of them, "either to receive the chalice at your hands, or to take you to prison."

"Monsignori," rejoined Benvenuto, "an artist like myself deserved no less than to be given in charge to functionaries like yourselves. Here I am; take me to prison. But I give you fair warning that all this will not put the Pope's chalice forward one stroke of the graver."

Benvenuto went with them to the governor of the prison, who, having doubtless received his instructions in advance, invited him to dine with him. Throughout the repast the governor used every conceivable argument to induce Benvenuto to satisfy the Pope by carrying the chalice to him, assuring him that, if he would make that concession, Clement VII., violent and obstinate as he was, would forget his displeasure. But the artist replied that he had already shown the Holy Father his chalice six times since he began it, and that that was all that could justly be required of him; moreover, he said he knew his Holiness, and that he was not to be trusted; that he might very well, when he had the chalice in his hands, take it from him altogether, and give it to some idiot to finish, who would spoil it. He reiterated his readiness to return the five hundred crowns paid in advance.

Having said so much, Benvenuto met all subsequent arguments of the governor by exalting his cook to the skies, and praising his wines.

After dinner, all his compatriots, all his dearest friends, all his apprentices, led by Ascanio, called upon him to implore him not to rush headlong to destruction by resisting the commands of Clement VII.; but Benvenuto told them that he had long desired to establish the great truth that a goldsmith can be more obstinate than a Pope; and as the most favorable opportunity he could ask for was now at hand, he certainly would not let it pass, for fear that it might not return.

His compatriots withdrew, shrugging their shoulders, his friends vowing that he was mad, and Ascanio weeping bitterly.

Fortunately Pompeo did not forget Cellini, and meanwhile he was saying slyly to the Pope, —

"Most Holy Father, give your servant a free hand; I will send word to this obstinate fellow that, since he is so determined, he may send me the five hundred crowns; as he is a notorious spendthrift he will not have that sum at his disposal, and will be compelled to give up the chalice to me."

Clement considered this an excellent device, and bade Pompeo do as he suggested. And so, that same evening, as Cellini was about to be taken to the cell assigned him, a chamberlain made his appearance, and informed the goldsmith that his Holiness accepted his ultimatum, and demanded the delivery of the chalice or the five hundred crowns without delay.

Benvenuto replied that they had but to take him to his workshop, and he would give them the five hundred crowns.

He was escorted thither by four Swiss, accompanied by the chamberlain. He entered his bedroom, drew a key from his pocket, opened a small iron closet built into the wall, plunged his hand into a large bag, took out five hundred crowns, and, having given them to the chamberlain, showed him and the four Swiss the door. It should be said, in justice to Benvenuto Cellini, that they received four crowns for their trouble, and in justice to the Swiss, that they kissed his hands as they took their leave.

The chamberlain returned forthwith to the Holy Father, and delivered the five hundred crowns, whereupon his Holiness, in his desperation, flew into a violent rage, and began to abuse Pompeo.

"Go thyself to my great engraver at his workshop, animal," he said, "employ all the soothing arguments of which thy ignorant folly is capable, and say to him that if he will consent to finish my chalice, I will give him whatever facilities he may require."

"But, your Holiness," said Pompeo, "will it not be time to-morrow morning?"

"I fear lest it be already too late this evening, imbecile, and I do not choose that Benvenuto shall sleep upon his wrath; therefore do my bidding on the instant, and let me not fail to have a favorable reply to-morrow morning at my levée."

Pompeo thereupon left the Vatican with drooping feathers, and repaired to Benvenuto's workshop; it was closed.

He peered through the key-hole and through the cracks in the door, and scrutinized all the windows, one after another, to see if there was not one which showed a light; but all were dark. He ventured to knock a second time somewhat louder than at first, and then a third time, still louder.

Thereupon a window on the first floor opened, and Benvenuto appeared in his shirt, arquebus in hand.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

"I," the messenger replied.

"Who art thou?" rejoined the goldsmith, although he recognized his man at once.

"Pompeo."

"Thou liest," said Benvenuto; "I know Pompeo well, and he is far too great a coward to venture out into the streets of Rome at this hour."

"But, my dear Cellini, I swear —"

"Hold thy peace! thou art a villain, and hast taken the poor devil's name to induce me to open my door, and then to rob me."

"Master Benvenuto, may I die —"

"Say but another word," cried Benvenuto, pointing the arquebus toward his interlocutor, "and that wish of thine will be gratified."

Pompeo fled at full speed, crying "Murder!" and disappeared around the corner of the nearest street.

Benvenuto thereupon closed his window, hung his arquebus on its nail, and went to bed once more, laughing in his beard at poor Pompeo's fright.

The next morning, as he went down to his shop, which had been opened an hour earlier by his apprentices, he spied Pompeo on the opposite side of the street, where he had been doing sentry duty since day-break, waiting to see him descend.

As soon as he saw Cellini, Pompeo waved his hand to him in the most affectionately friendly way imaginable.

"Aha!" said Cellini, "is it you, my dear Pompeo? By my faith! I was within an ace last night of making a churl pay dearly for his insolence in assuming your name."

"Indeed!" said Pompeo, forcing himself to smile, and drawing gradually nearer to the shop; "how did it happen, pray?"

Benvenuto thereupon described the incident to his Holiness's messenger; but as his friend Benvenuto had described him in their nocturnal interview as a coward, Pompeo did not dare confess his identity with the visitor. When his tale was finished, Cellini asked Pompeo to what happy circumstance he was indebted for the honor of so early a visit from him.

Pompeo thereupon acquitted himself, but in somewhat different terms, be it understood, of the errand upon which Clement VII. had sent him to his goldsmith. Benvenuto's features expanded as he proceeded. Clement VII. yielded; *ergo* the goldsmith had been more obstinate than the Pope.

"Say to his Holiness," said Benvenuto, when the message was duly delivered, "that I shall be very happy

to obey him, and to do anything in my power to regain his favor, which I have lost, not by any fault of my own, but through the evil machinations of envious rivals. As for yourself, Signore Pompeo, as the Pope does not lack retainers, I counsel you, in your own interest, to look to it that another than you is sent to me hereafter; for your health's sake, Signore Pompeo, interfere no more in my affairs; in pity for yourself, never happen in my path, and for the welfare of my soul, Pompeo, pray God that I be not your Cæsar."

Pompeo waited to hear no more, but returned to Clement VII. with Cellini's reply, of which, however, he suppressed the peroration.

Some time thereafter, in order to put the seal to his reconciliation with Benvenuto, Clement VII. ordered his medallion struck by him. Benvenuto struck it in bronze, in silver, and in gold, and then carried it to him. The Pope was so enraptured with it that he cried out in his admiration, that so beautiful a medallion had never been produced by the ancients.

"Ah, well, your Holiness," said Benvenuto, "had not I displayed some firmness, we should have been at enmity to-day; for I would never have forgiven you, and you would have lost a devoted servant. Look you, Holy Father," he continued, by way of good counsel, "your Holiness would not do ill to remember now and then the opinion of many discreet folk, that one should bleed seven times before cutting once, and you would do well also to allow yourself to be something less easily made the dupe of lying tongues and envious detractors; so much for your guidance in future, and we will say no more about it, Most Holy Father."

Thus did Benvenuto pardon Clement VII., which he certainly would not have done had he loved him less;

but, as his compatriot, he was deeply attached to him. Great, therefore, was his sorrow when the Pope suddenly died, a few months subsequent to the episode we have described. The man of iron burst into tears at the news, and for a week he wept like a child. The Pontiff's demise was doubly calamitous to poor Cellini. On the very day of his burial he met Pompeo, whom he had not seen since the day when he bade him spare him the too frequent infliction of his presence.

It should be said that since Cellini's dire threats, the unhappy Pompeo had not dared to go out unless accompanied by a dozen men, well armed, to whom he gave the same pay that the Pope gave his Swiss Guards; so that every walk that he took in the city cost him two or three crowns. And even when surrounded by his twelve sbirri, he trembled at the thought of meeting Benvenuto Cellini, for he knew that if the meeting should result in an affray, and any mishap should befall the goldsmith, the Pope, who was really very fond of him, would make him, Pompeo, pay dearly for it. But, as we have said, Clement VII. was dead, and his death restored some little courage to Pompeo.

Benvenuto had been to St. Peter's to kiss the feet of the deceased Pontiff, and was returning through the street Dei Banchi, accompanied by Pagolo and Ascanio, when he found himself face to face with Pompeo and his twelve men. At the sight of his enemy, Pompeo became very pale; but as he looked around and saw how amply provided he was with defenders, while Benvenuto had only two boys with him, he took heart of grace, halted, and nodded his head mockingly, while he toyed with the hilt of his dagger with his right hand.

At sight of this group of men by whom his master was threatened, Ascanio put his hand to his sword,

while Pagolo pretended to be looking in another direction; but Benvenuto did not choose to expose his beloved pupil to so unequal a conflict. He laid his hand upon Ascanio's, pushing the half-drawn blade back into the scabbard, and walked on as if he had seen nothing, or as if he had taken no offence at what he saw. Ascanio could hardly recognize his master in such guise, but as his master withdrew, he withdrew with him.

Pompeo triumphantly made a deep salutation to Benvenuto, and pursued his way, still surrounded by his shirri, who imitated his bravado.

Benvenuto bit his lips till the blood came, while externally his features wore a smile. His behavior was inexplicable to any one who knew the irascible nature of the illustrious goldsmith.

But they had not proceeded a hundred yards when he stopped before the workshop of one of his confrères, and went in, alleging as a pretext his desire to see an antique vase which had recently been found in the Etruscan tombs of Corneto. He bade his pupils go on to the shop, and promised to join them there in a few moments.

As the reader will understand, this was only a pretext to get Ascanio out of the way, for as soon as he thought that the young man and his companion, concerning whom he was less anxious because he was sure that such courage as he possessed would not carry him too far, had turned the corner of the street, he replaced the vase upon the shelf from which he took it, and darted out of the shop.

With three strides Benvenuto was in the street where he had met Pompeo; but Pompeo was no longer there. Luckily, or rather unluckily, this man, encompassed

by his twelve sbirri, was a noticeable object, and so when Benvenuto inquired as to the direction he had taken, the first person to whom he applied was able to give him the information, and like a bloodhound that has recovered a lost scent Benvenuto started in pursuit.

Pompeo had stopped at a druggist's door, at the corner of the Chiavica, and was vaunting to the worthy compounder of drugs the prowess he had shown in his meeting with Benvenuto Cellini, when his eye suddenly fell upon the latter turning the corner of the street, with fire in his eye, and the perspiration streaming down his forehead.

Benvenuto shouted exultantly as he caught sight of him, and Pompeo stopped short in the middle of his sentence. It was evident that something terrible was about to happen. The bravos formed a group around Pompeo and drew their swords.

It was an insane performance for one man to attack thirteen, but Benvenuto was, as we have said, one of those leonine creatures who do not count their enemies. Against the thirteen swords which threatened him, he drew a small keen-edged dagger which he always wore in his girdle, and rushed into the centre of the group, sweeping aside two or three swords with one arm, overturning two or three men with the other, until he made his way to where Pompeo stood, and seized him by the collar. But the group at once closed upon him.

Thereupon naught could be seen save a confused struggling mass, whence issued loud shouts, and above which swords were waving. For a moment the living mass rolled on the ground, in shapeless, inextricable confusion, then a man sprang to his feet with a shout of triumph, and with a mighty effort, forced his way out of the group as he made his way in, bleeding

himself, but triumphantly waving his blood-stained dagger. It was Benvenuto Cellini.

Another man remained upon the pavement, writhing in the agony of death. He had received two blows from the dagger, one below the ear, the other at the base of the neck behind the collar bone. In a few seconds he breathed his last, — it was Pompeo.

Any other than Benvenuto, after such a deed, would have taken himself off at full speed, but he passed his dagger to his left hand, drew his sword, and resolutely awaited the sbirri.

But the sbirri had no further business with Benvenuto; he who paid them was dead, and consequently could pay them no more. They ran off like a flock of frightened rabbits, leaving Pompeo's body where it lay.

At that juncture Ascanio appeared, and rushed into his master's arms; he was not deceived by the ruse of the Etruscan vase, but although he had made all possible speed he arrived a few seconds too late.

III.

DÆDALUS.

BENVENUTO returned to his abode with Ascanio, somewhat ill at ease, not because of the three wounds he had received, which were all too slight to occasion him any anxiety, but because of the possible results of the affray. Six months before, he had killed Guasconti, his brother's murderer, but had come off scot free by virtue of the protection of Pope Clement VII.; moreover, that act was committed by way of reprisal, but now Benvenuto's protector had gone the way of all flesh, and the prospect was much more ominous.

Remorse, be it understood, did not disturb him for one moment. But we beg our readers not for that reason to form an unfavorable opinion of our worthy goldsmith, who after killing a man, after killing two men perhaps, — indeed, if we search his past very carefully, after killing three men, — although he had a wholesome dread of the watch, did not for one instant fear to meet his God.

For this man, in the year of grace 1540, was an ordinary man, an every-day man, as the Germans say. Men thought so little of dying in those days, that they naturally came to think very little of killing; we are brave to-day, but the men of those days were foolhardy; we are men grown, they were hot-headed youths. Life was so abundant in those days that men lost it, gave

it, sold it, nay, even took it, with absolute indifference and recklessness.

There was once an author who was calumniated and abused for many years, whose name was made a synonym for treachery, cruelty, and all the words which mean infamy, and it needed this nineteenth century, the most impartial since the birth of humanity, to rehabilitate that author as the grand patriot and noble-hearted man he was. And yet Nicolo Machiavelli's only crime was that he lived at an epoch when brute strength and success were all in all; when folk judged by deeds, not words, and when such men as Cesar Borgia the sovereign, Machiavelli the thinker, and Benvenuto Cellini the artisan, marched straight to their goal, without thought of methods or reasons.

One day a body was found in the public square of Cesena, cut in four pieces; it was the body of Ramiro d' Orco. Now, as Ramiro d' Orco was a considerable personage in Italy, the Florentine Republic sought to ascertain the causes of his death. The Eight of the Signoria therefore wrote to Machiavelli, their ambassador at Cesena, to satisfy their curiosity.

But Machiavelli made no other reply than this:—

“MAGNIFICENT SIGNORIA:—I have naught to say anent the death of Ramiro d' Orco, save this: that no prince in the world is so skilful as Cesar Borgia in the art of making and unmaking men according to their deserts.

“MACHIAVELLI.”

Benvenuto was an exponent of the theory enunciated by the illustrious secretary of the Florentine Republic. Benvenuto the genius, Cesar Borgia the prince, both considered themselves above the laws by virtue of their power. In their eyes the distinction between what was

just and what was unjust was identical with the distinction between what they could and what they could not do; of right and duty they had not the slightest conception. A man stood in their path, they suppressed the man. To-day civilization does him the honor of purchasing him.

But in those old days the blood was boiling so abundantly in the veins of the young nations that they shed it for their health's sake.

They fought by instinct, not for their country to any great extent, not for women to any great extent, but largely for the sake of fighting, nation against nation, man against man. Benvenuto made war upon Pompeo as François I. did upon Charles V. France and Spain fought an intermittent duel, now at Marignano, and again at Pavia; all as if it were the most natural thing in the world, without preamble, without long harangues, without lamentation.

In the same way genius was exercised by those who possessed it as an innate faculty, as an absolute royal power, based upon divine right: art in the sixteenth century was looked upon as the natural birthright of man.

We must not therefore wonder at these men who wondered at nothing; we have, to explain their homicides, their whims, and their faults, an expression which explains and justifies everything in our country, especially in these days of ours: —

That was the fashion.

Benvenuto therefore did simply what it was the fashion to do; Pompeo annoyed Benvenuto Cellini, and Benvenuto suppressed Pompeo.

But the police occasionally investigated these acts of suppression; they were very careful not to protect a

man when he was alive, but perhaps once in ten times they showed a feeble desire to avenge him when he was dead.

They experienced such a desire in the matter of Pompeo and Benvenuto Cellini. As the goldsmith, having returned to his shop, was putting certain papers in the fire, and some money in his pocket, he was arrested by the pontifical sbirri, and taken to the castle of San Angelo, — an occurrence for which he was almost consoled by the reflection that the castle of San Angelo was where noblemen were imprisoned.

But another thought that was no less efficacious in bringing consolation to Cellini as he entered the castle was this, — that a man endowed with so inventive a mind as his need not long delay about leaving it, in one way or another. And so, when he was taken before the governor, who was sitting at a table covered with a green cloth, and looking through a great pile of papers, he said: —

“Sir Governor, multiply your locks and bolts and sentinels threefold; confine me in your highest cell or in your deepest dungeon; keep close watch upon me all day, and lie awake all night; and yet I warn you that, despite all that, I will escape.”

The governor looked up at the prisoner who addressed him with such unheard of assurance, and recognized Benvenuto Cellini, whom he had had the honor of entertaining three months before.

Notwithstanding his acquaintance with the man, perhaps because of it, Benvenuto's allocution caused the worthy governor the most profound dismay. He was a Florentine, one Master Georgio, a knight of the Ugolini, and an excellent man, but somewhat weak in the head. However, he soon recovered from his first

surprise, and ordered Benvenuto to be taken to the highest cell in the castle. The platform was immediately above it; a sentinel was stationed on the platform, and another sentinel at the foot of the wall.

The governor called the prisoner's attention to these details, and when he thought that he had had time to digest them, he said:—

"My dear Benvenuto, one may open locks, force doors, dig out from an underground dungeon, make a hole through a wall, bribe sentinels and put jailers to sleep; but without wings one cannot descend to earth from this height."

"I will do it, nevertheless," said Cellini.

The governor looked him in the eye, and began to think that his prisoner was mad.

"Why, in that case, you propose to fly?"

"Why not? I have always believed that man can fly, but I have lacked time to make the experiment. Here I shall have time enough, and, pardieu! I mean to solve the problem. The adventure of Dædalus is history, not fable."

"Beware the sun, dear Benvenuto," sneeringly replied the governor; "beware the sun"

"I will fly away by night," said Benvenuto.

The governor was not expecting that reply, so that he had no suitable repartee at hand, and withdrew in a rage.

In good sooth it was most important that Benvenuto should make his escape, at any price. At another time he would not have been at all perturbed because he had killed a man, and would have been quit of all responsibility by following the procession of the Virgin in August, clad in a doublet and cloak of blue armoisin. But the new Pope, Paul III., was vindictive to the

last degree, and when he was still Monsignore Farnese, Benvenuto had had a crow to pluck with him, apropos of a vase which the goldsmith refused to deliver until paid for, and which his Eminence sought to procure by force, the result being to subject Benvenuto to the dire necessity of using his Eminence's retainers somewhat roughly. Moreover, the Holy Father was jealous because King François I. had commanded Monseigneur de Montluc, his ambassador to the Holy See, to request that Benvenuto be sent to France. When he was informed of Benvenuto's imprisonment, Monseigneur de Montluc urged the request more strenuously than before, thinking thereby to render the unfortunate prisoner a service; but he was entirely unfamiliar with the character of the new Pope, who was even more obstinate than his predecessor, Clement VII. Now Paul III. had sworn that Benvenuto should pay dearly for his escapade, and if he was not precisely in danger of death,—a pope would have thought twice in those days before ordering such an artist to the gallows,—he was in great danger of being forgotten in his prison. It was therefore of the utmost importance that Benvenuto should not forget himself, and that was why he was determined to take flight without awaiting the interrogatories and judgment, which might never have arrived; for the Pope, angered by the intervention of François I., refused even to hear Benvenuto Cellini's name mentioned. The prisoner knew all this from Ascanio, who was managing his establishment, and who, by dint of persistent entreaties, had obtained permission to visit his master. Their interviews, of course, were held through two iron gratings, and in presence of witnesses watching to see that the pupil passed neither file, nor rope, nor knife to his master.

As soon as the door of his cell was locked behind the governor, Benvenuto set about inspecting his surroundings.

The following articles were contained within the four walls of his new abiding place: a bed, a fireplace, a table, and two chairs. Two days after his installation there, he obtained a supply of clay and a modelling tool. The governor at first declined to allow him to have these means of distraction, but he changed his mind upon reflecting that, if the artist's mind were thus employed, he might perhaps abandon the idea of escape, to which he clung so tenaciously. The same day, Benvenuto sketched a colossal Venus.

All this of itself was no great matter; but in conjunction with imagination, patience, and energy, it was much.

On a certain very cold day in December, when the fire was lighted on the hearth, the servant changed the sheets on his bed and left the soiled ones upon a chair. As soon as the door was closed, Benvenuto made one bound from the chair on which he was sitting to the bed, took out of the mattress two enormous handfuls of the maize leaves which are used to stuff mattresses in Italy, stowed the sheets away in their place, returned to his statue, took up his tool and resumed his work. At that moment the servant returned for the forgotten sheets, and after looking everywhere for them, asked Benvenuto if he had not seen them. But he replied carelessly, as if absorbed by his work, that some of his fellows doubtless had taken them, or that he carried them away himself without knowing it. The servant had no suspicion of the truth, so little time had elapsed since he left the room, and Benvenuto played his part so naturally; and as the sheets were never found, he

was very careful to say nothing, for fear of being obliged to pay for them or of losing his employment.

One who has never lived through some supreme crisis can form no idea of the possibilities of such a time in the way of terrible catastrophes and poignant anguish. The most trivial accidents of life arouse in us joy or despair. As soon as the servant left the room, Benvenuto fell upon his knees, and thanked God for the help He had sent him.

As his bed was never touched until the next morning after it was once made, he quietly left the sheets in the mattress.

When the night came he began to cut the sheets, which luckily were new and strong, in strips three or four inches wide, then tied them together as securely as he could; lastly, he cut open his statue, which was of clay, hollowed it out, placed his treasure in the cavity, then spread clay over the wound, and smoothed it off with his finger and his modelling tool, until the most skilful artist could not have discovered that poor Venus had been made to undergo the Cæsarean operation.

The next morning the governor entered the prisoner's cell unexpectedly, as he was accustomed to do, but found him as usual calm and hard at work. Every morning the poor man, who had been specially threatened for the night, trembled lest he should find the cell empty; and it should be said, in justice to his frankness, that he did not conceal his joy every morning when he found it occupied.

"I confess that you make me terribly anxious, Benvenuto," said the poor man; "however, I begin to think that your threats of escape amount to nothing."

"I don't threaten you, Master Georgio," rejoined Benvenuto, "I warn you."

"Do you still hope to fly away?"

"Luckily it isn't a mere hope, but downright certainty, *pardieu!*"

"*Demonio!* how will you do it?" cried the poor governor, dismayed beyond measure by Benvenuto's real or pretended confidence in his means of escape.

"That's my secret, master. But I give you fair warning that my wings are growing."

The governor instinctively turned his eye upon the prisoner's shoulders.

"'Tis thus," continued Benvenuto, working away at his statue, and rounding the hips in such fashion that one would have thought he proposed to rival the Venus Callipyge. "Betwixt us there is a duel impending. You have on your side enormous towers, thick doors, strong bolts, innumerable keepers always on the alert; I have on my side my brain, and these poor hands, and I warn you very frankly that you will be beaten. But as you are a very clever man, as you have taken every possible precaution, you will at least, when I am gone, have the consolation of knowing that it is through no fault of yours, Master Georgio, that you have no occasion to reproach yourself at all, Master Georgio, and that you neglected nothing that could help you to detain me, Master Georgio. And now what say you to this hip, for you are a lover of art, I know."

Such unblushing assurance enraged the unhappy official. His prisoner had become his fixed idea, upon which all his faculties were centred. He grew melancholy, lost his appetite, and started constantly, like one suddenly aroused from sleep. One night Benvenuto heard a great noise upon the platform; then it was transferred to his corridor, and finally stopped at his door. The door opened, and he saw Master Georgio,

in dressing-gown and nightcap, attended by four jailers and eight guards. The governor rushed to his bedside with distorted features. Benvenuto sat up in bed and laughed in his face. The governor, without taking offence at his hilarity, breathed like a diver returning to the surface.

"Ah! God be praised!" he cried; "he is still here! There's much good sense in the saying, *Songe — men-songe*" (Dream — lie).

"In God's name, what's the matter?" demanded Benvenuto, "and what happy circumstance affords me the pleasure of a visit from you at such an hour, Master Georgio?"

"Jésus Dieu! it's nothing at all, and I am quit of it this time for the fright. Did I not dream that your accursed wings had grown, — huge wings, whereon you tranquilly hovered above the castle of San Angelo, saying, 'Adieu, my dear governor, adieu! I did not wish to go away without taking leave of you. I go; I pray that I may be so blessed as never to see you more.'"

"What! did I say that to you, Master Georgio?"

"Those were your very words. Ah, Benvenuto, you are a sorry guest for me!"

"Oh! I trust that you do not deem me so ill-bred as that. Happily it was but a dream; for otherwise I would not forgive you."

"Happily it is not true. I hold you fast, my dear friend, and although truth compels me to say that your society is not of the most agreeable to me, I hope to hold you for a long time yet to come."

"I do not think it," retorted Benvenuto, with the confident smile which caused his host to use strong language.

The governor went out, cursing Benvenuto roundly, and the next morning he issued orders that his cell should be inspected every two hours, night and day. This rigid inspection was continued for a month; but at the end of that time, as there was no apparent reason to believe that Benvenuto was even thinking of escape, the vigilance of his keepers was somewhat relaxed.

Benvenuto, however, had employed the month in accomplishing a terrible task.

As we have said, he minutely examined his cell immediately after he was first consigned to it, and from that moment his mind was made up as to the manner of his escape. His window was barred, and the bars were too strong to be removed with the hand or with his modelling tool, the only iron instrument he possessed. The chimney narrowed so toward the top that the prisoner must needs have had the fairy Melusine's power of transforming herself into a serpent to pass through it.

The door remained. Ah, the door! Let us see how the door was made.

It was a heavy oaken door two fingers thick, secured by two locks and four bolts, and sheathed on the inside with iron plates kept in place by nails at the top and bottom. It was through that door that the escape must be effected.

Benvenuto had noticed in the corridor, a few steps from the door, the stairway leading to the platform. At intervals of two hours he heard the footsteps of the relieving sentinel going up, then the steps of the other coming down; after which he would hear nothing more for another two hours.

The question for him to solve, then, was simply this: how to reach the other side of that door, which was

secured by two locks and four bolts, and furthermore sheathed on the inside with iron plates kept in place by nails at the top and bottom. The solution of this problem was the task to which Benvenuto had devoted the month in question.

With his modelling tool, which was of iron, he removed, one by one, the heads of all the nails, save four above and four below, which he left until the last day: then, in order that his work might not be detected, he replaced the missing heads with exactly similar ones, modelled in clay and covered with iron filings, so that it was impossible for the keenest eye to distinguish the false from the true. As there were, at top and bottom together, some sixty nails, and as it took at least one hour, and sometimes two, to decapitate each nail, the magnitude of the task may be understood.

Every evening, when everybody had retired, and nothing could be heard save the footsteps of the sentinel walking back and forth over his head, he built a great fire on the hearth, and piled glowing embers against the iron plates on his door; the iron became red hot, and gradually transformed to charcoal the wood upon which it was applied; but no indication of the carbonizing process appeared on the other side of the door.

For a whole month Benvenuto devoted himself to this task, as we have said; but at the end of the month it was finished, and he only awaited a favorable opportunity to make his escape. He was compelled, however, to wait a few days, for the moon was near the full when the work was done.

There was nothing more to be done to the nails, so Benvenuto continued to char the door, and drive the governor to desperation. That very day the functionary entered his cell more preoccupied than ever.

"My dear prisoner," said the worthy man, whose mind constantly recurred to his fixed idea, "do you still propose to fly away? Come, tell me frankly."

"More than ever, my dear host," replied Benvenuto.

"Look you," said the governor, "you may say what you choose, but upon my word, I believe it's impossible."

"Impossible, Master Georgio, impossible!" rejoined the artist; "why, you know full well that that word does not exist for me, who have always exerted myself to do those things which are the most impossible for other men, and that with success. Impossible, my dear host! Why, have I not sometimes amused myself by making nature jealous, by fashioning with gold and emeralds and diamonds a flower fairer far than all the flowers that the dew empearls? Think you that he who can make flowers can not make wings?"

"May God help me!" said the governor; "with your insolent assurance you'll make me lose my wits! But tell me, in order that these wings may sustain your weight in the air, — a thing which seems impossible to me, I confess, — what form shall you give them?"

"I have thought deeply thereupon, as you may well imagine, since my safety depends entirely upon the shape of my wings."

"With what result?"

"After examining all flying things, I have concluded that, if I wish to reproduce by art what they have received from God, I can copy the bat most successfully."

"But when all is said, Benvenuto," continued the governor, "even if you had the materials with which to make a pair of wings, would not your courage fail you when the time came to use them?"

"Give me what I need for their construction, my dear governor, and I'll reply by flying away."

"What do you need, in God's name?"

"Oh! mon Dieu! almost nothing; a little forge, an anvil, files, tongs and pincers to make the springs, and twenty yards of oiled silk for the membranes.

"Good! very good!" said Master Georgio; "that reassures me somewhat, for, clever as you may be, you never will succeed in obtaining all those things here."

"'Tis done," rejoined Benvenuto.

The governor leaped from his chair; but he instantly reflected that it was a material impossibility. And yet, for all that, his poor brain had not a moment's respite. Every bird that flew by his window he imagined to be Benvenuto Cellini, so great is the influence of a master mind over one of moderate capacity.

The same day Master Georgio sent for the most skilful machinist in all Rome, and ordered him to measure him for a pair of bat's wings.

The machinist stared at the governor in blank amazement, without replying, thinking, with some reason, that Master Georgio had gone mad.

But as Master Georgio insisted, as Master Georgio was wealthy, and as Master Georgio had the wherewithal to pay for insane freaks, if he chose to indulge in them, the machinist set about the task, and a week later brought him a pair of magnificent wings, fitted to an iron waist to be worn upon the body, and worked by means of an extremely ingenious arrangement of springs, with most encouraging regularity.

Master Georgio paid his man the stipulated price, measured the space required to accommodate the apparatus, went up to Benvenuto's cell, and without a word overturned everything therein, looking under the bed,

peering up the chimney, fumbling in the mattress, and leaving not the smallest corner unvisited.

Then he went out, still without speaking, convinced that, unless Benvenuto was a sorcerer, no pair of wings similar to his own could be hidden in his cell.

It was clear that the unhappy governor's brain was becoming more and more disordered.

Upon descending to his own quarters, Master Georgio found the machinist waiting for him; he had returned to call his attention to the fact that there was an iron ring at the end of each wing, intended to support the legs of a man flying in a horizontal position.

The machinist had no sooner left him than Master Georgio locked himself in, donned the iron waist, unfolded his wings, hung up his legs, and, lying flat upon his stomach, made his first attempt at flying.

But, try as he would, he could not succeed in rising above the floor.

After two or three trials, always with the same result, he sent for the mechanic once more.

"Master," said he, "I have tried your wings, but they won't work."

"How did you try them?"

Master Georgio described his repeated experiments in detail. The mechanic listened with a sober face, and said, when he had concluded:—

"I am not surprised; as you lay on the floor, you had n't a sufficient quantity of air under your wings. You must go to the top of the castle of San Angelo, and boldly launch yourself into space."

"And you think that in that way I can fly?"

"I am sure of it."

"If you are so sure of it, would it not be as well to make the experiment yourself?"

"The wings are proportioned to the weight of your body and not of mine," replied the machinist. "Wings to carry my weight would need to measure a foot and a half more from tip to tip."

And with that he bowed and took his leave.

"The devil!" exclaimed Master Georgio.

Throughout that day Master Georgio indulged in various vagaries, which tended to prove that his reason, like Roland's, was penetrating farther and farther into imaginary realms.

In the evening, just at bedtime, he summoned all the servants, all the jailers, all the guards.

"If," said he, "you learn that Benvenuto Cellini is intending to fly away, let him go, and notify me, nothing more; for I shall know where to go to capture him, even in the dark, since I am myself a veritable bat, while he, whatever he may say, is only a false bat."

The poor governor was quite mad; but as they hoped that a night's rest would have a soothing effect upon him, they decided to wait until morning before advising the Pope.

Moreover it was an abominable night, dark and rainy, and no one cared to go out in such weather; always excepting Benvenuto Cellini, who had selected that very night for his escape, in a spirit of contrariety doubtless.

And so, as soon as he heard the clock strike ten, and the footsteps indicating that the sentinel had been relieved, he fell on his knees and offered a fervent prayer, after which he set to work.

In the first place he removed the heads of the four nails, which alone held the iron plates in place. The last yielded to his efforts just at midnight.

He heard the steps of the sentinel going up to the

platform; he stood with his ear glued to the door, without breathing, until the relieved sentinel came down, the steps died away in the distance, and silence reigned once more.

The rain fell with redoubled force, and Benvenuto's heart leaped for joy as he heard it beating against the window.

He at once tried to remove the iron plates; as there was nothing to hold them, they yielded to his efforts, and he placed them, one by one, against the wall.

He then lay flat upon the floor, and attacked the bottom of the door with his modelling tool, sharpened like a dagger, and fitted to a wooden handle. The oak was entirely changed to carbon, and gave way at the first touch.

In an instant Benvenuto had made an aperture at the bottom of the door sufficiently large to allow him to crawl through it. He reopened the belly of his statue, took out the strips of linen, coiled them around his waist like a girdle, armed himself with his modelling-tool, of which he had, as we have said, made a dagger, and fell on his knees once more and prayed.

Then he passed his head through the hole, then his shoulders, then the rest of his body, and found himself in the corridor.

He stood erect; but his legs trembled so that he was compelled to lean against the wall for support. His heart was beating as if it would burst, and his head was on fire. A drop of perspiration trembled at the end of each hair, and he clutched the handle of his dagger in his hand, as if some one were trying to tear it away from him.

However, as everything was quiet, as nothing was stirring and not a sound was to be heard, Benvenuto

soon recovered himself, and felt his way along the wall of the corridor with his hand, until the wall came to an end. Then he put out his foot and felt the first step of the staircase, or, more properly speaking, the ladder, which led to the platform.

He mounted the rungs, one by one, shivering as the wood creaked under his feet, until he felt a breath of air; then the rain beat against his face as his head rose above the level of the platform, and as he had been in most intense darkness for a quarter of an hour, he was able to judge at once what reason he had to fear or hope.

The balance seemed to incline toward hope.

The sentinel had taken refuge from the storm in his sentry-box. Now, as the sentinels who mounted guard upon the castle of San Angelo were stationed there, not to inspect the platform, but to look down into the moat and survey the surrounding country, the closed side of the sentry-box faced the top of the ladder by which Benvenuto ascended.

The artist crept cautiously on his hands and knees toward that part of the platform which was farthest removed from the sentry-box. There he securely fastened one end of his improvised rope to a jutting projection some six inches in length, and then knelt for the third time.

"O Lord!" he muttered, "O Lord! do Thou help me, since I am seeking to help myself."

With that prayer upon his lips, he let himself down by his hands, heedless of the bruises upon his knees and his forehead, which, from time to time, rubbed against the face of the wall, and at last reached the solid earth.

When he felt the ground beneath his feet, his breast

swelled with an infinitude of joy and pride. He contemplated the immense height from which he had descended, and could not avoid saying in an undertone, "Free at last!" But his joy was short-lived.

As he turned away from the tower, his knees trembled under him; directly in front of him rose a wall recently built, and of which he knew nothing; he was lost.

Everything seemed to give way within him, and in his despair he fell to the ground; but as he fell, his foot struck against something hard,—it was a long beam; he gave a slight exclamation of surprise and delight; he was saved.

Ah! no one knows what heart-rending alternations of joy and hope one short minute of life can contain.

Benvenuto seized the beam as a shipwrecked sailor seizes the spar which may save him from drowning. Under ordinary circumstances two strong men would have found difficulty in lifting it; he dragged it to the wall, and stood it on end against it. Then he climbed to the top of the wall, clinging to the beam with his hands and knees, but when he arrived there his strength was insufficient to raise the beam and lower it on the other side.

For a moment his head swam; he closed his eyes, and it seemed as if he were struggling in a lake of flames.

Suddenly he remembered his strips of linen, by means of which he had descended from the platform.

He slid down the beam to the ground once more, and ran to the spot where he had left them hanging; but he had fastened them so securely at the opposite end, that he could not detach them. In his desperation he raised himself from the ground by hanging to them, pulling with all his strength, and hoping to break them. Fortunately one of the knots slipped at last, and Benvenuto

fell to the ground, grasping a fragment some twelve feet long.

This was all that he needed; he rose with a bound, and, filled with fresh vigor, climbed up to the top of the wall once more, fastened the cord to the end of the beam, and slid down on the other side.

When he reached the end of the cord he felt in vain for the ground with his feet, and, upon looking over his shoulder, saw that it was still some six feet away. He let go the cord, and dropped.

He lay still for an instant; he was completely exhausted, and there was no skin left upon his legs and hands. For some moments he gazed stupidly at his bleeding flesh; but five o'clock struck, and he saw that the stars were beginning to pale.

He rose; but as he rose, a sentinel whom he had not noticed, but who had undoubtedly witnessed his performance, walked toward him. Benvenuto saw that he was lost, and that he must either kill or be killed. He drew his modelling tool from his belt, and marched straight toward the guard, with such a determined expression that that worthy doubtless realized that he had not only a powerful man, but a deathly despair, to contend with. Benvenuto was determined not to give ground, but suddenly the soldier turned his back upon him as if he had not seen him. The prisoner understood what that meant.

He ran to the last rampart, and found himself some twelve or fifteen feet above the moat. Such a trifle was not likely to stop a man like Benvenuto Cellini, in his present predicament, when he had left part of his cord hanging from the top of the tower, and the other part attached to the beam, so that he had nothing left with which to lower himself, and there was no time to lose.

He hung by his hands from a ring in the masonry, and, with a mental prayer, let himself drop.

This time he fainted outright.

An hour passed before he came to himself; but the coolness which is always noticeable in the air as dawn approaches, revived him. He lay for an instant with his mind in confusion, then passed his hand over his forehead and remembered everything.

He felt a sharp pain in his head, and saw blood upon the stones where he lay, which had trickled down from his face. He put his hand to his forehead a second time, not to collect his thoughts, but to investigate his wounds, which he found were but skin deep. He smiled and tried to stand up, but fell heavily back; his right leg was broken three inches above the ankle. The leg was so benumbed that at first he felt no pain.

He at once removed his shirt and tore it into strips, then put the ends of the bone together as well as he could, and applied the bandage, binding it with all his strength, and passing it under the sole of his foot now and then, in order to keep the bones in place.

Then he dragged himself on all fours toward one of the city gates which was within five hundred yards. After half an hour of atrocious suffering, he reached the gate only to find that it was closed. But he noticed a large stone under the gate, which yielded to his first attempt to remove it, and he passed through the hole left by it.

He had not taken twenty steps beyond the gate when he was attacked by a pack of famished dogs, who were attracted by the odor of blood. He drew his modelling tool, and despatched the largest and most savage with a blow in the side. The others immediately threw themselves upon their defunct comrade and devoured him.

Benvenuto dragged himself along to the church of La Transpontina, where he fell in with a water-carrier who had just filled his jars and loaded his donkey. He called him.

"Look you," he said; "I was with my mistress; circumstances compelled me, although I went in at the door, to come out through the window. I leaped from the first floor, and broke my leg; carry me to the steps of Saint Peter's, and I will give you a golden crown.

The water-carrier, without a word, took the wounded man on his shoulder, and carried him to the designated spot. Having received his pay, he went his way without so much as looking behind.

Thereupon Benvenuto, still on all fours, made his way to the palace of Monseigneur de Montluc, the French Ambassador, who lived only a few steps away.

Monseigneur de Montluc exerted himself so zealously in his behalf, that at the end of a month Benvenuto was cured, at the end of two months he was pardoned, and at the end of four months he started for France with Ascanio and Pagolo.

The poor governor, who had gone mad, lived and died a madman, constantly imagining that he was a bat, and making the most violent efforts to fly.

IV.

SCOZZONE.

WHEN Benvenuto Cellini arrived in France, François I. was at the château of Fontainebleau with his whole court. The artist stopped in the town, sending word of his arrival to the Cardinal of Ferrara. The cardinal, who knew that the king was impatiently awaiting his coming, at once transmitted the intelligence to his Majesty. Benvenuto was received by the king the same day.

"Benvenuto," he said, addressing him in that mellifluous and expressive tongue in which the artist wrote so well, "for a few days, while you are recovering from your fatigue and vexation, repose, enjoy yourself, make merry, and meanwhile we will reflect and determine upon some noble work for you to execute."

Thereupon he ordered apartments in the château to be made ready for the artist, and that he should want for nothing.

Thus Benvenuto found himself at the outset installed in the very centre of French civilization, at that time behind that of Italy, with which it was already struggling for supremacy, and which it was soon to surpass. As he looked around, he could easily believe that he had never left the Tuscan capital, for he found himself in the midst of the arts and artists he had known at Florence; Primaticcio had succeeded Leonardo da Vinci and Rosso.

It was for Benvenuto, therefore, to show himself not unworthy of these illustrious predecessors, and to carry the art of statuary as high in the eyes of the most gallant court of Europe as those three great masters had carried the art of painting. And so Benvenuto determined to anticipate the king's wishes by not waiting for him to command the noble work promised, and to execute it himself, of his own motion, and with his own resources. He had readily discovered the king's affection for the royal residence where he had met him, and determined to flatter his preference by executing a statue to be called the "Nymph of Fontainebleau."

A lovely work to undertake was this statue, crowned at once with oak and wheat-ears and vines; for Fontainebleau is partly field, partly forest, and partly vineyard. The nymph of whom Benvenuto dreamed must therefore be reminiscent of Ceres and Diana and Erigone, — three types of marvellous beauty melted into one, and which, while retaining their distinctive characteristics, should still form but a single whole. Then there should be represented upon the pedestal the attributes of those three goddesses; and they who have seen the fascinating figures about the statue of Perseus know the Florentine master's method of executing those marvellous details.

But it was his misfortune that, although he had in his own mind his ideal of beauty, he was sadly in need of a human model for the material part of his work. Where was he to find this model, in whose single person could be found the threefold beauty of three goddesses?

Certain it is, that if, as in the olden days, the days of Apelles and Phidias, the beauties of the day, those queens of loveliness, had come of their own accord to pose for Benvenuto, he would have found what he

sought within the precincts of the court; for there was a whole Olympus in the flower of youth and beauty. There were Catherine de Medicis, then but one and twenty; Marguerite de Valois, Queen of Navarre, who was called the Fourth Grace and the Tenth Muse; and lastly, Madame la Duchesse d'Etampes, whom we shall meet frequently in the course of this narrative, and who was known as the loveliest of blue-stockings and the most learned of beauties. In this galaxy the artist could have found more than he needed; but the days of Apelles and Phidias had long gone by, and he must look elsewhere.

It was with great pleasure, therefore, that he learned that the court was about to set out for Paris. Unfortunately, as Benvenuto himself says, the court in those days travelled like a funeral procession. Preceded by twelve to fifteen thousand horse, halting for the night in some place where there were no more than two or three houses, wasting four hours every evening in pitching the tents, and four hours every morning in striking them,—in this way, although the distance was but sixteen leagues, five days were spent in the journey from Fontainebleau to Paris.

Twenty times on the way Benvenuto was tempted to push forward, but as often the Cardinal of Ferrara dissuaded him, saying that, if the king was compelled to pass a single day without seeing him, he would certainly ask what had become of him, and when he learned that he had left the procession would look upon his uncere- monious departure as a failure of respect toward himself. So Benvenuto chafed at his bit, and tried to kill time during the long halt by sketching his nymph of Fontainebleau.

At last he arrived at Paris, His first visit was to

Primaticcio, who was commissioned to continue the work of Leonardo da Vinci and Rosso at Fontainebleau. Primaticcio, who had lived long at Paris, should be able at once to put him upon the path he was seeking, and to tell him where to look for models.

A word, in passing, as to Primaticcio.

Il Signor Francesco Primaticcio, who was commonly called at this time Le Bologna, from his birthplace, had studied under Jules Romain for six years, and had lived eight years in France, whither François I. had summoned him upon the advice of the Marquis of Mantua, his great purveyor of artists. He was, as any one may see at Fontainebleau, a man of prodigious fecundity, with a broad, florid manner, and irreproachable regularity of outline. For a long time Primaticcio, with his encyclopedic brain, his vast store of knowledge, and his boundless talent, which embraced all varieties of painting, — for a long time, we say, he was despised, but in our day he has been avenged for three centuries of injustice. Under the inspiration of religious ardor, he painted the pictures in the chapel of Beauregard; in moral subjects he personified the principal Christian virtues at the Hôtel Montmorency; and the immensity of Fontainebleau was filled to overflowing with his works. At the Golden Gate and in the Salle du Bal he treated the most graceful subjects of mythology and allegory; in the Gallery of Ulysses and the Chamber of Saint Louis he was an epic poet with Homer, and translated with his brush the *Odyssey* and a portion of the *Iliad*. Then he passed from the Age of Fable to heroic times, and historical subjects became his study. The principal incidents in the life of Alexander and Romulus, and the surrender of Havre, were reproduced in the painting with which he decorated the Grand

Gallery and the apartment adjoining the Salle du Bal. He turned his attention to the beauties of nature in the great landscapes of the Cabinet of Curiosities. In short, if we care to take the measurement of his eminent talent, to consider the various forms in which it found expression, and to reckon up its work, we shall find that in ninety-eight large pictures and a hundred and thirty smaller ones he has treated, one after another, landscapes, marine views, historical, allegorical, and religious subjects, portraits, and the themes of epic poetry.

He was, as may be seen, a man likely to appreciate Benvenuto; and so, as soon as Benvenuto arrived at Paris, he ran to Primaticcio with open arms, and was welcomed by him in the same temper.

After the first serious conversation between the two friends meeting thus in a foreign land, Benvenuto opened his portfolio, imparted all his ideas to Primaticcio, showed him all his sketches, and asked him if there was any one of the models he was accustomed to use who fulfilled the necessary conditions.

Primaticcio shook his head, smiling sadly. In truth, they were no longer in Italy, the daughter of Greece and rival of her mother. France was in those days, as it is to-day, the land of grace, and prettiness, and coquetry; but in vain would one have sought in the domain of the Valois that imperious loveliness which inspired the genius of Michel-Angelo and Raphael, of John of Bologna and Andrea del Sarto, on the banks of the Tiber and the Arno. To be sure, if the painter or sculptor had been at liberty to choose a model at will among the aristocracy, he would soon have found the types he sought; but like those shades which are detained on this side of the Styx, he was perforce content .

to see those noble, lovely forms, the constant objects of his artistic aspirations, pass over into the Elysian Fields which he was forbidden to enter.

It turned out as Primaticcio anticipated: Benvenuto passed in review his whole army of models, and saw not one who seemed to combine all the qualities essential for the work of which he was dreaming.

Thereupon he caused all the Venuses at a crown the sitting whose names were furnished him to be summoned to the Cardinal of Ferrara's palace, where he was installed, but none of them fulfilled his expectations.

Benvenuto was almost at his wit's end when, one evening, as he was returning home alone along Rue des Petits-Champs, after supping with three compatriots whom he had met at Paris, — namely, Pietro Strozzi, the Count of Anguillara, his brother in law, and Galeotto Pico, nephew of the famous Pico della Mirandole, — he noticed a graceful, lovely girl walking in front of him. Benvenuto fairly leaped for joy: the girl was, of all whom he had thus far seen, by far the best qualified to give shape to his dream. He followed her, therefore. She walked along by the church of Saint-Honoré, and turned into Rue du Pelican; there she looked around to see if she was still followed, and, seeing Benvenuto within a few steps, hastily opened a door and disappeared. Benvenuto went to the same door and opened it in time to see the skirt of the young woman's dress disappear at a bend in the stairway, which was lighted by a smoking lamp.

He went up to the first floor: a chamber door stood ajar, and in the chamber he discovered the girl he had followed.

Without explaining the artistic motive of his intrusion, indeed, without saying a word, Benvenuto,

desirous to ascertain whether the outlines of her body corresponded with those of her face, walked around and around the poor, bewildered girl, as he might have done had she been a statue, taking her arms and raising them above her head in the attitude which he proposed that his Nymph of Fontainebleau should assume; and she obeyed his gestures mechanically.

There was little of Ceres in the model now before his eyes, and still less of Diana, but very much of Erigone. The master thereupon made up his mind, in view of the manifest impossibility of finding the three types united in one person, to be satisfied with the Bacchante. But for the Bacchante he had certainly found all that he desired, — sparkling eyes, coral lips, teeth like pearls, graceful neck, well rounded shoulders, and broad hips; and in the slender wrists and ankles, and the long nails, there was a suggestion of aristocratic blood, which removed the artist's last hesitation.

"What is your name, mademoiselle?" Benvenuto, with his foreign accent, at last asked the poor girl, whose wonder momentarily increased.

"Catherine, monsieur, at your service," she replied.

"Very good! Here is a golden crown, Mademoiselle Catherine, for the trouble I have caused you. Come to me to-morrow at the Cardinal of Ferrara's hotel on Rue Saint-Martin, and I will give you as much more for the same service."

The girl hesitated an instant, thinking that he was making sport of her. But the gold crown seemed to prove that he was speaking seriously, and after a very brief pause, she said, —

"At what time?"

"Ten o'clock in the morning: does that suit your convenience?"

"Perfectly."

"So that I may rely upon you?"

"I will come."

Benvenuto saluted her as he would have saluted a duchess, and returned home with a glad heart. He at once burned all his idealistic sketches, and set to work upon one based upon flesh and blood. Having completed the drawing, he placed a quantity of wax upon a pedestal, and beneath his dexterous touch it instantly assumed the shape of the nymph of whom he had dreamed; so that when Catherine appeared at the door of his studio the next morning, a part of his task was already done.

As we have said, Catherine utterly failed to understand Benvenuto's motives. She was vastly astonished, therefore, when, having closed the door behind her, he showed her the statue already begun, and explained why he had asked her to come.

Catherine was a light-hearted, joyous creature, and laughed heartily at her mistake; her bosom swelled with pride at the thought of posing as a model for a goddess to be presented to a king, so she removed her clothing, and of her own motion assumed the pose indicated by the statue,—so gracefully, and withal so exactly, that the artist, when he turned and saw her posed so naturally and well, exclaimed in delight.

Benvenuto at once set to work: his was, as we have said, one of those noble, vigorous, artistic natures in which inspiration is aroused by the work beneath their hands, and which seem to become illumined as their work proceeds. He had thrown aside his doublet, and as he went back and forth from the model to the copy, from nature to art, he seemed, with his bare neck and arms, like Jupiter, ready to kindle everything that he touched

into flame. Catherine, accustomed to the commonplace or worn out organization of the young men of the lower classes with whom she had associated, or the young noblemen whose plaything she had been, gazed at this man with the inspired glance, quickened respiration, and swelling breast, with an unfamiliar sensation of wonder. She seemed herself to rise to the master's level; her eyes shone, and the artist's inspiration was communicated to the model.

The sitting lasted two hours; at the end of that time Benvenuto gave Catherine her gold crown, and took leave of her as ceremoniously as before, making an appointment for the following day at the same hour.

Catherine returned to her own room, and did not go out during the day. The next morning she was at the studio ten minutes before the appointed time.

The same scene was repeated. On that day, as on the day before, Benvenuto's inspiration rose to sublime heights; beneath his hand, as beneath that of Prometheus, the clay seemed to breathe. The Bacchante's head was already modelled, and seemed a living head set upon a shapeless trunk. Catherine smiled upon this celestial sister, fashioned in her image; she had never been so happy, and, strangely enough, she was unable to explain the sentiment which caused her happiness.

On the following day the master and the model met again at the same hour; but Catherine was conscious of a sensation, absent on the preceding days, which caused the blood to rush to her face as soon as she began to disrobe. The poor child was beginning to love, and love brought modesty in its train.

On the fourth day it was still worse, and Benvenuto was compelled several times to remind her that he was not modelling the Venus de Medicis, but Erigone,

drunken with debauchery and wine. Moreover, her patience would be tried but a little longer; two days more, and the model's services would be no longer required.

In the afternoon of the second day, Benvenuto, having given the last touch to his statue, thanked Catherine for her complaisance, and gave her four gold crowns; but Catherine let them fall to the floor. The poor child's dream was ended; from that moment she must return to her former condition, and that condition had become hateful to her since the day that she entered the master's studio. Benvenuto, who had no suspicion of what was taking place in the girl's heart, picked up the four crowns, handed them to her once more, pressing her hand as he did so, and said to her that, if he ever could be of service to her, she must apply to no one but him. Then he passed into the apartment where his apprentices were at work, seeking Ascanio, to whom he wished to exhibit his completed statue.

Catherine kissed the tools the master had used, one after another, and went away, weeping.

The next morning Catherine appeared at the studio while Benvenuto was alone, and when he, astonished to see her again, asked her why she had come, she knelt at his feet and asked him if he did not need a servant.

Benvenuto had an artist's heart, quick to detect feeling in another. He divined what was taking place in the poor child's heart, and raised her from the floor, kissing her upon the forehead as he did so.

From that moment Catherine was a part of the studio, which, as we have said, she brightened and made cheerful with her childish ways, and enlivened by her unceasing activity. She had become almost indispensable to everybody, above all to Benvenuto. She it was who

superintended and managed everything, scolding and caressing Ruperta, who was dismayed at her first appearance in the household, but ended by loving her as everybody else did.

The Erigone lost nothing by this arrangement. Having the model always at hand, Benvenuto had retouched and perfected it with greater care than he had ever before bestowed upon one of his statues, and had then carried it to François I., whose admiration knew no bounds, and who ordered him to execute it in silver. He subsequently conversed for a long time with the goldsmith, asked him if he was pleased with his studio, where it was situated, and whether there were beautiful things to be seen there; and when he dismissed him, he determined in his own mind to take him by surprise some morning, but said nothing to him of his intention.

Thus did matters stand when this history opens, — Benvenuto working, Catherine singing, Ascanio dreaming, and Pagolo praying.

On the day following that on which Ascanio returned home so late, thanks to his excursion in the neighborhood of the Hôtel de Nesle, there was a loud knocking at the street door. Dame Ruperta at once rose to answer the summons, but Scozzone (the reader will remember that this was the name given to Catherine by Benvenuto) was already out of the room.

A moment later they heard her voice, half joyous, half terrified, crying, —

“ O mon Dieu ! master ! mon Dieu ! it is the king ! The king in person has come to see your studio ! ”

And poor Scozzone, leaving all the doors open behind her, reappeared, pale and trembling, on the threshold of the workshop, where Benvenuto was at work, surrounded by his pupils and apprentices.

V.

GENIUS AND ROYALTY.

IN very truth, François I. was entering the courtyard with all his retinue. He led by the hand the Duchesse d'Etampes. The King of Navarre followed with the Dauphine, Catherine de Medicis. The Dauphin, afterwards Henri II., came next, with his aunt, Marguerite de Valois, Queen of Navarre. Almost all the nobility accompanied them.

Benvenuto went to meet them, without confusion or embarrassment, and welcomed the king, princes, great lords, and beautiful women as a friend welcomes friends. And yet there were in the throng the most illustrious names of France, and the most resplendent beauties in the world. Marguerite charmed, Madame d'Etampes entranced, Catherine de Medicis astonished, Diane de Poitiers dazzled. But Benvenuto was familiar with the purest types of antiquity and of the sixteenth century in Italy, even as the beloved pupil of Michel-Angelo was accustomed to the society of kings.

"You must needs permit us, madame, to admire by your side the marvels we are to behold," said François I. to the Duchesse d'Etampes, who replied with a smile.

Anne de Pisseleu, Duchesse d'Etampes, who since the king's return from his captivity in Spain had succeeded the Comtesse de Châteaubriand in his favor, was at this time in all the splendor of a truly royal

loveliness. Her figure was erect and graceful, and she carried her charming head with a dignity and feline grace which recalled at once the cat and panther, which she also resembled in her habit of pouncing upon one unexpectedly, and in her murderous appetites. With all this the royal courtesan was very clever at assuming an air of sincerity and candor which would disarm the most suspicious. Nothing could be more mobile or more treacherous than the features of this pale-lipped woman, to-day Hermione, to-morrow Galatea, with her smile, sometimes cajoling, sometimes terrible,—her glance, at one moment caressing and suggestive, and the next flaming with wrath. She had a habit of raising her eyelids so slowly that one could never tell whether they would disclose a languorous or a threatening expression. Haughty and imperious, she subjugated François I. by holding his passions enthralled; proud and jealous, she insisted that he should call upon the Comtesse de Châteaubriand to return the jewels he had given her; by returning them in the form of bullion, the lovely and melancholy countess did at least protest against the profanation. Supple and deceitful, she had closed her eyes more than once when the king's capricious fancy seemed to distinguish some charming young woman at court, whom, however, he invariably abandoned very soon to return to his beautiful enchantress.

"I was in haste to see you, Benvenuto, for two months have now passed since your coming to our realm, and vexatious affairs of state have since that time forbade my turning my thoughts to things artistic. Impute it to my brother and cousin, the Emperor, who gives me not a moment of repose."

"If it is your will, Sire, I will write to him, and pray that he will give you time to be a great friend to



art, since you have proved to him ere this that you are a mighty captain."

"Pray, do you know Charles V.?" inquired the King of Navarre.

"Four years since, Sire, I had the honor, being then at Rome, to present a missal of my making to his sacred Majesty, and make a speech to him which seemed to touch him nearly."

"What said his sacred Majesty to you?"

"He said that he already knew me from having seen upon the Pope's cope, three years before, a carved stud, which did me honor."

"Ah! I see that you are spoiled for royal compliments," said François I.

"Sire, 'tis true that I have had the fortune to please many cardinals, grand dukes, princes, and kings."

"Prithee, show me your beautiful designs, that I may see if I shall not be a harder judge to please than others."

"Sire, I have had very little time; however, here are a vase and silver basin which I have commenced, and which are perhaps not too unworthy of your Majesty's attention."

The king examined the two works of art for five minutes without a word. It seemed that the handiwork made him forget the workman. At last, as the ladies gathered curiously about him, he spoke.

"See, mesdames," he cried, "what marvellous workmanship! Observe the bold and novel shape of this vase! What ingenuity and marvellous modelling in the bas-reliefs and bosses, mon Dieu! Especially do I admire the beauty of the lines; and see how true to life and how diverse are the attitudes of the figures! Look at the one holding her arms over her head; the fugitive

gesture is so naturally seized that one wonders that she does n't continue the movement. In very truth, I believe that the ancients never did anything so fine. I remember the best works of antiquity, and those of the most eminent artists of Italy; but nothing ever made so deep an impression upon me as this. O Madame de Navarre, I pray you look at this pretty child lost among the flowers, and waving her little foot in the air; how graceful and pretty and instinct with life it all is!"

"Others have complimented me, great king," cried Benvenuto, "but you understand me!"

"Have you aught else?" asked the king, greedily.

"Here is a medallion representing Leda and her swan, made for Cardinal Gabriel Cesarini; and here a seal cut in intaglio, representing Saint John and Saint Ambrose; this is a reliquary, enamelled by myself —"

"Do you strike medals?" interposed Madame d'Etampes.

"As Cavadone of Milan did, madame."

"And you work in enamel?" said Marguerite.

"Like Amerigo of Florence."

"And you engrave seals?" inquired Catherine.

"Like Lantizco of Perouse. Pray, did you think, madame, that my talent is confined to the production of tiny golden toys and great silver pieces? I can do a little of everything, God be praised! I am a passable military engineer, and I have twice prevented the capture of Rome. I can turn a sonnet prettily, and your Majesty has but to order me to compose a poem, provided that it be in praise of yourself, and I will undertake to execute it neither better nor worse than if my name were Clement Marot. As to music, which my father taught me with a stick, I found the method an admirable one, and I am so good a performer on the

flute and cornet that Clement VII. employed me among his musicians at the age of twenty-four. Furthermore, I discovered the secret of compounding an excellent powder, and I can also make beautiful carbines and surgical instruments. If your Majesty is at war, and chooses to employ me as man-at-arms, you will find that I am not to be despised in that capacity, and that I know as well how to handle an arquebus as to sight a culverin. As a hunter I have brought down my twenty-five peacocks in a day, and as an artillerist I have freed the Emperor from the Prince of Orange, and your Majesty from the Connétable de Bourbon: traitors seem not to be fortunate when they encounter me."

"Of which exploit are you the prouder," the young Dauphin interrupted, "of having killed the constable or the twenty-five peacocks?"

"I am proud of neither, monseigneur. Like all other gifts, address is God-given, and I simply used my address."

"By my faith, I was ignorant that you had already rendered me so great a service," said the king, — "a service which, however, my sister Marguerite will be at great pains to pardon you. Was it indeed you who slew the Connétable de Bourbon? Prithee, how came it to pass?"

"Mon Dieu! it was the simplest thing in the world. The constable's army had arrived unexpectedly before Rome, and a vigorous assault upon the fortifications was in progress. I sallied forth, with a few friends, to watch the fighting. As I left my house, I instinctively put my arquebus over my shoulder. When we reached the walls of the city, I saw that there was nothing to be done; but, I said to myself, it shall not be said that I came hither to so little purpose. So I aimed my

arquebus toward the point where I saw a numerous and compact group of soldiers, and singled out one who stood a head taller than his companions. He fell, and a great uproar at once arose, caused by the shot I had fired. I had, in truth, slain Bourbon. I learned afterward that it was he who towered above his companions."

While Benvenuto was relating this incident with a most indifferent air, the circle of lords and ladies of which he was the centre spread out somewhat, and they all gazed with respect, and almost with terror, at this unconscious hero. François I. alone remained at his side.

"And so, my dear fellow," he said, "I see that you loaned me your gallantry before consecrating your genius to me."

"Sire," Benvenuto rejoined with a smile, "I believe, in good sooth, that I was born to be your servitor. An incident of my early youth has always seemed to me to admit of no other interpretation. Your crest is a salamander, is it not?"

"Yes, with this device: *Nutrisco et extinguo.*"

"Very well! When I was about five years old, I was sitting one day with my father in a small room where they had been scalding the lye, and where a rousing fire of young oak was still burning. It was very cold. Happening to glance at the fire, I espied a tiny creature like a lizard diverting itself in the spot where the heat was most intense. I pointed it out to my father, and my father—pray pardon me this detail of a somewhat brutal custom of my country—struck me a violent blow, and said to me, with great gentleness, 'I do not strike thee because thou hast done wrong, dear child, but so that thou mayst remember that the little lizard thou hast seen in the fire is a salamander. No

human being has ever seen that animal save thou.' Was not that a premonition of fate, Sire? Indeed, I think I was predestined to do as I have done, for at the age of twenty I was about to set out for England, when the sculptor Pietro Torregiano, who was to take me thither, told me that in his youth he one day struck our Michel-Angelo in the face, on the occasion of some studio quarrel. Ah! I abandoned all thought of the journey then; not for a prince's title would I have travelled with one who had raised his hand against my great sculptor. I remained in Italy, and from Italy, instead of going to England, I came to France."

"France, proud of your choice, Benvenuto, will see to it that you do not sigh for your fatherland."

"Oh! my fatherland is art, and my prince he who commands the richest cup at my hands."

"Have you any beautiful work now in contemplation, Cellini?"

"O yes, Sire, — a Christ. Not a Christ upon the Cross, but Christ in His radiance and glory; and I shall copy as closely as possible the infinite beauty of the guise in which he revealed himself to me."

"What!" laughed Marguerite, the sceptic; "in addition to all the kings of earth, have you seen the King of Heaven, too?"

"Yes, madame," replied Benvenuto, with childlike simplicity.

"Oh! pray tell us of that," said the Queen of Navarre.

"Willingly, madame," said Benvenuto, with a confident air, which implied that it did not occur to him that any one could doubt any part of his story.

"Some time before," he continued, "I had seen Satan and all his legions, whom a necromancing friend of

mine, a priest, evoked for me at the Coliseum. Indeed, we had much ado to rid ourselves of them. But the dread souvenir of those infernal apparitions was forever banished from my mind when, in answer to my fervent prayer, the blessed Saviour of mankind appeared to me, in a flood of sunlight, crowned with glory, and brought sweet consolation to me in the misery of my captivity."

"And are you sure beyond a peradventure," demanded the Queen of Navarre, "so sure that you have no shadow of doubt, that Christ really appeared to you?"

"I have no doubt of it, madame."

"In that case, Benvenuto, go on and fashion a Christ for our chapel," said François I., with his usual good humor.

"Sire, if your Majesty will so far indulge me, I pray you to order something different, and allow me to postpone the execution of that work."

"Why so?"

"Because I promised God to undertake it for no other sovereign than Him."

"*A la bonne heure!* Be it so! Benvenuto, I need twelve candlesticks for my table."

"Ah! that is a different matter; and therein, Sire, you shall be obeyed."

"It is my wish that they should take the form of twelve silver statues."

"The effect will be magnificent, Sire."

"They must represent six gods and six goddesses, and be of my own height."

"Why, your order is for a whole epic poem," said the Duchesse d'Etampes; "for a work of marvellous, surprising splendor, is it not, Monsieur Benvenuto?"

"I am never surprised, madame."

"I should be greatly surprised, myself," retorted the duchess, somewhat piqued, "if other sculptors than those of the olden time could carry such a task to completion."

"I hope, nevertheless, to execute it as satisfactorily as they could have done," rejoined Benvenuto, coolly.

"Oho! are you not inclined to boast a little, Monsieur Benvenuto?"

"I never boast, madame."

As he made this reply with perfect calmness, Cellini looked at Madame d'Etampes, and the haughty duchess lowered her eyes, in spite of herself, under that firm, assured glance, in which there was no trace of irritation. Her resentment was aroused by the consciousness of his superiority, to which she yielded even while resisting it, and without knowing in what it consisted. She had thought hitherto that beauty was the greatest power in the world; she had forgotten genius.

"What treasure," said she, with a bitter sneer, "would suffice to recompense such talent as yours?"

"None that I can command, i' faith," rejoined François I., "and apropos, Benvenuto, I remember that you have as yet received but five hundred crowns. Will you be content with the stipend which I allowed my painter, Leonardo da Vinci, seven hundred gold crowns yearly? I will pay over and above that for all works which you may execute for me."

"Sire, your offer is worthy such a king as François I., and—I venture to say it—of such an artist as Cellini. And yet I shall make so bold as to prefer a request to your Majesty."

"It is granted in advance, Benvenuto."

"Sire, I am but ill and narrowly accommodated in this edifice. One of my pupils has discovered a location

much more favorably situated than this for the execution of such great works as my king may choose to command. The property in question belongs to your Majesty; it is the Grand-Nesle. It is at the disposal of the Provost of Paris, but he does not dwell therein; he occupies only the Petit-Nesle, which I will gladly leave in his possession."

"So be it, Benvenuto," said François; "take up your abode at the Grand-Nesle, and I shall have only to cross the river to talk with you and admire your masterpieces."

"Consider, Sire," interposed Madame d'Etampes, "that you thereby, for no motive, deprive a nobleman, and one devoted to my service, of property appertaining to his office."

Benvenuto glanced at her, and for the second time Anne lowered her eyes beneath that steady, piercing gaze. Cellini rejoined, with the same naïve good faith with which he had described the supernatural apparitions:—

"I, too, am of noble birth, madame; my family descends from a gallant officer, who held high rank under Julius Cæsar,—one Fiorino, of Cellino, near Montefiascone,—and who gave his name to Florence; while your provost and his ancestors, if my memory serves me, have never given their name to anything. However," continued Benvenuto, turning to François, and changing his expression and his tone, "it may be that I have made too bold,—it may be that I shall incur the hatred of powerful and influential persons, who, despite your Majesty's protection, may prove too strong for me at last. The Provost of Paris is said to have something very like an army at his orders."

"I have been told," the king interrupted, "that on

a certain day, at Rome, one Cellini, a goldsmith, retained, in default of payment therefor, a silver vase ordered by Monsieur Farnese, then cardinal, and to-day Pope."

"It is true, Sire."

"Furthermore, that the cardinal's whole household stormed the goldsmith's studio, sword in hand, with the design of carrying away the vase by force."

"That, too, is true."

"But this Cellini, in ambush behind the door, armed with his carbine, did defend himself so valorously that he put Monseigneur le Cardinal's people to flight; and was paid by the cardinal on the following day."

"All that, Sire, is strictly true."

"Very good! are not you the Cellini in question?"

"Yes, Sire; let your Majesty but continue to bestow your favor upon me and nothing has any power to terrify me."

"In that case, go straight before you," said the king, smiling in his beard; "go where you will, since you are of noble blood."

Madame d'Etampes said no more, but she registered a mental vow of deadly hatred to Cellini from that moment, — the hatred of an offended woman.

"One last favor, Sire," said Cellini. "I cannot present all my workmen to you; they are ten in number, some French, some German, all worthy, talented comrades. But here are my two pupils whom I brought from Italy with me, Pagolo and Ascanio. Come forward, Pagolo, and raise your head and your eyes a little; not impertinently, but like an honest man who has no evil action to blush for. This good fellow lacks inventive genius perhaps, Sire, and is slightly lacking in earnestness, too; but he is a careful, conscientious

artist, who works slowly, but well, who comprehends my ideas perfectly, and executes them faithfully. And this is Ascanio, my noble-hearted, amiable pupil, and my beloved child. It is doubtless true that he has not the vigorous creative faculty which will represent in a bas-relief the serried ranks of two hostile armies meeting in deadly encounter, and tearing each other to pieces, or lions and tigers clinging with claws and teeth to the edge of a vase. Nor has he the original fancy which invents horrible chimeras and impossible dragons. No; but his soul, which resembles his body, has the instinct of a divine ideal, so to speak. Ask him to design an angel, or a group of nymphs, and no one can equal the exquisite poesy and grace of his work. With Pagolo I have four arms, with Ascanio I have two souls; and then he loves me, and I am very happy to have always by my side a pure and devoted heart like his."

While his master was speaking, Ascanio stood near him, modestly, but without embarrassment, in an attitude of unstudied grace, and Madame d'Etampes could not remove her eyes from the fascinating young Italian, black-eyed and black-haired, who seemed a living copy of Apollino.

"If Ascanio," said she, "understands grace and beauty so well, and if he cares to come some morning to the Hôtel d'Etampes, I will furnish him with precious stones and gold, with which he may cause some marvellous flower to bloom for me."

Ascanio bowed and thanked her with a glance.

"And I," said the king, "grant to him, as well as to Pagolo, a yearly pension of one hundred crowns."

"I undertake to make them earn their pension, Sire," said Benvenuto.

"But who is the lovely child with the long eye-

lashes, hiding yonder in the corner?" said François, spying Scozzone for the first time.

"Oh, pay no attention to her, Sire," replied Benvenuto, with a frown; "she is the only one of the beautiful things in this studio whom I like not to have noticed."

"Aha! you are jealous, my Benvenuto."

"Mon Dieu! Sire, I like not that any hand should be laid upon my property; to compare small things with great, it is as if some other should dare to think of Madame d'Etampes; you would be furious, Sire. Scozzone is my duchess."

The duchess, who was gazing at Ascanio, bit her lips at this unceremonious interruption. Many courtiers smiled in spite of themselves, and all the ladies giggled. As for the king, he laughed outright.

"Foi de gentilhomme! your jealousy is within its right, Benvenuto, and an artist and a king may well understand each other. Adieu, my friend: I commend my statues to your attention. You will commence with Jupiter, naturally, and when you have finished the model you will show it to me. Adieu, and good luck! We will meet at the Hôtel de Nesle."

"To bid me show you the model is a simple matter, Sire; but how shall I gain entrance to the Louvre?"

"Your name will be given at the gates, with orders to introduce you to my presence."

Cellini bowed, and with Pagolo and Ascanio, escorted the king and court to the street. At the door he knelt and kissed the king's hand.

"Sire," he said with deep feeling, "you have heretofore saved me from captivity, perhaps from death, through the intervention of Monseigneur de Montluc; you have overwhelmed me with wealth, you have honored my poor

studio with your presence ; but far more than all this, Sire, is the fact, and I know not how to thank you that it is so, that you so magnificently anticipate all my dreams. We ordinarily work only for a chosen few scattered through the centuries, but I shall have had the signal honor of finding a living judge, always present, always enlightened. Until now I have been only the workman of the future ; permit me henceforth to call myself your Majesty's goldsmith."

"My workman, my goldsmith, my artist, and my friend, Benvenuto, if the last title seems to you no more deserving of contempt than the others. Adieu, or rather, *au revoir*."

It is needless to say that all the princes and nobles followed the example set by the king, and loaded Cellini with flattery and offers of friendship.

When all were gone, and Benvenuto was left alone in the courtyard with his pupils, they thanked him, Ascanio effusively, Pagolo with something very like constraint.

"Nay, do not thank me, my children, it's not worth while. But look you, if you do in truth consider yourselves under any obligation to me, I wish, since this subject of conversation was introduced to-day, to ask a service at your hands ; it relates to something which I have very much at heart. You heard what I said to the king apropos of Catherine, and what I said to him truly expressed the deepest feeling of my heart. The child is necessary to my life, my friends ; to my life as an artist, because, as you know, her services as a model are offered so freely and joyously ; to my life as a man, because I think that she loves me. I pray you, therefore, although she is beautiful, and although you are young, as she also is, do not let your thoughts rest upon Catherine ; there are enough other lovely girls in the world. Do not tear

my heart, do not insult my affection by casting bold glances upon my Scozzone ; nay, rather watch over her in my absence, and advise her as if you were her brothers. I conjure you, observe my wishes herein, for I know myself and my feeling in this matter, and I swear before God, that if I should discover aught amiss, I would kill her and her accomplice."

"Master," said Ascanio, "I respect you as my master, and I love you as my father ; have no fear."

"Blessed Jesus !" cried Pagolo, clasping his hands, "may God preserve me from thinking of such an infamous action ! Do I not know that I owe everything to you, and would it not be a crime thus to abuse your sacred confidence in me, and to repay your benefactions by such dastardly treachery ?"

"Thanks, my friends," said Benvenuto, pressing their hands. "I have perfect faith in you, and I am content. Now, Pagolo, return to your work, for I have promised the seal at which you are working to M. de Villeroi for to-morrow ; while Ascanio and myself pay a visit to the estate which our gracious king has bestowed upon us, and of which we will take possession on Sunday next, peaceably or by force."

Then he turned to Ascanio.

"Come, Ascanio," said he, "let us go and see if this Nesle habitation, which seemed to you so eligible in its external aspect, has internal appointments corresponding to its reputation."

Before Ascanio had time to offer any observation, Benvenuto, with a parting glance over the studio to see if every workman was in his place, and a light tap upon Scozzone's plump, rosy cheek, passed his arm through his pupil's, drew him toward the door, and went out with him.

VI.

TO WHAT USE A DUENNA MAY BE PUT.

THEY had taken hardly ten steps in the street, when they met a man of some fifty years, rather short of stature, but with a handsome, mobile countenance.

"I was about to call upon you, Benvenuto," said the new arrival, whom Ascanio saluted with respect, mingled with veneration, and whose hand Benvenuto cordially grasped.

"Is your business of importance, my dear Francesco?" said the goldsmith. "In that case, I will return with you; or was it for no other purpose than a friendly call? In that case, come with us."

"It was to proffer you some friendly advice, Benvenuto."

"I will gladly listen. Advice is always a good thing to receive when it is proffered by a friend."

"But that which I have to give you is for no other ear than yours."

"This youth is another myself, Francesco; say on."

"I would already have done so, had I thought that I ought to do it," replied Benvenuto's friend.

"Pardon, master," said Ascanio, discreetly moving apart.

"Very well; go alone whither I purposed going with you, dear boy," said Benvenuto; "as you know, when you have seen a thing it is as if I had myself seen it. Look most carefully into every detail: see if the

studio will have a good light, if the courtyard will be a convenient place for a furnace, and if it will be possible to separate our workshop from that of the other apprentices. Do not forget the tennis-court."

With that Benvenuto passed his arm through the stranger's, waved his hand to Ascanio, and returned to the studio, leaving the young man standing in the middle of Rue Saint-Martin.

In very truth there was in the commission intrusted to him by his master more than enough to embarrass Ascanio. His embarrassment was by no means slight, even when Benvenuto proposed that they should make the visit of inspection in company. Judge, then, what it became when he found himself confronted with the prospect of making it all alone. He had watched Colombe two Sundays without daring to follow her, had followed her on the third without daring to accost her, and now he was to present himself at her home; and for what purpose? To examine the Hôtel de Nesle, which Benvenuto proposed, by way of pastime, to take from Colombe's father on the following Sunday, willy-nilly.

It was a false position for anybody; it was terrible for a lover.

Fortunately it was a long distance from Rue Saint-Martin to the Hôtel de Nesle. Had it been only a step or two, Ascanio would not have taken them; but it was a half-league, so he started.

Nothing so familiarizes one with danger as to be separated from it by a considerable time or distance. To all strong minds and happy dispositions, reflection is a powerful auxiliary. Ascanio belonged to the latter class. In those days it was not fashionable to be disgusted with life before one had fairly entered upon it. All the impulses were ingenuous and ingenuously expressed, — joy

by laughter, sorrow by tears. Affectation was a thing almost unknown, in life as in art, and a comely youth of twenty was in no wise ashamed in those days to confess that he was happy

But in all Ascanio's embarrassment there was a certain amount of joy. He had not expected to see Colombe again until the following Sunday, and he was to see her that very day. Thus he had gained six days, and six days of waiting are, as everybody knows, six centuries according to a lover's reckoning.

And so, as he approached his destination, the affair became more simple in his eyes. He it was, to be sure, who had advised Benvenuto to ask the king for the Hôtel de Nesle for his studio, but could Colombe take it ill of him that he had desired to be near her? This installation of the Florentine goldsmith in the old palace of Amaury could not, it was true, be carried out without interference with Colombe's father, who looked upon it as his own; but would any real injury be inflicted upon Messire Robert d'Estourville when he did not occupy it? Moreover, there were a thousand ways in which Benvenuto could pay for his occupancy;—a chased cup for the provost, a necklace for his daughter (and Ascanio would undertake to make the necklace), might, and undoubtedly would, in that artistic age, make the rough places smooth. Ascanio had seen grand dukes, kings, and popes ready to give their coronets, sceptres, or tiaras as the price of one of the marvellous examples of his master's art. After all, then, supposing that matters should take that course, Messire Robert would eventually be in Master Benvenuto's debt; for Master Benvenuto was so generous that, if Messire Robert showed a disposition to be courteous and compliant, Ascanio was certain that he, Master Benvenuto, would deal right royally with him.

By the time he reached the end of Rue Saint-Martin, Ascanio looked upon himself as a messenger of peace, chosen by the Lord to maintain harmonious relations between two powers.

And yet, notwithstanding that conviction, Ascanio was not sorry—surely lovers are strange creatures—to lengthen his journey by ten minutes, and instead of crossing the Seine by boat, he walked the whole length of the quays, and crossed by the Pont aux Moulins. It may be that he chose that road because it was the same he had taken the evening before when following Colombe.

Whatever his motive for making the detour, he finally found himself in front of the Hôtel de Nesle in about twenty minutes.

But when he saw the little ogive door that he must pass through, when he saw the turrets of the lovely little Gothic palace boldly raising their heads above the wall, when he thought that behind those jalousies, half closed because of the heat, was his beautiful Colombe, the whole card-house of happy dreams which he had built on the road vanished like the structures one sees in the clouds, and which the wind overturns with one blow of its wing; he found himself face to face with reality, and reality did not seem to him the most reassuring thing in the world.

However, after a few moments of hesitation—hesitation which is the harder to understand, in that he was absolutely alone upon the quay in the intense heat—he realized that he must make up his mind to do something. As there was nothing for him to do but find his way into the hotel, he walked to the door and raised the knocker. But God only knows when he would have let it fall, had not the door chanced to open at that moment, bringing him face to face with a sort of Master Jacques, a man

about thirty years of age, half servant, half peasant. It was Messire Robert d'Estourville's gardener.

Ascanio and the gardener mutually recoiled a step.

"What do you want?" said the gardener; "whom do you seek?"

Ascanio, thus compelled to go forward with his mission, summoned all his courage, and replied bravely:—

"I desire to inspect the hotel."

"To inspect the hotel!" cried the gardener in amazement; "in whose name?"

"In the king's name!" Ascanio replied.

"In the king's name!" cried the gardener. "Jésus-Dieu! does the king intend to take it from us?"

"Perhaps so!"

"But what does it mean?"

"Pray understand, my friend," said Ascanio, with a self-possession upon which he mentally congratulated himself, "that I have no explanation to give you."

"True With whom do you desire to speak?"

"Is Monsieur le Prévôt within?" inquired Ascanio, knowing perfectly well that he was not.

"No, Monsieur; he is at the Châtelet."

"Indeed! Who takes his place in his absence?"

"His daughter is here; Mademoiselle Colombe."

Ascanio felt that he was blushing to his ears.

"And there is Dame Perrine, too," the gardener continued. "Does Monsieur desire to speak with Dame Perrine or with Mademoiselle Colombe?"

This was a very simple question, surely, and yet it caused a terrible conflict in Ascanio's mind. He opened his mouth to say that he wished to see Mademoiselle Colombe, and yet it was as if the audacious words refused to pass his lips, and he asked for Dame Perrine.

The gardener, who had no suspicion that his question,

which seemed so simple to him, had caused such a disturbance, bowed in token of obedience, and went across the courtyard toward the door of the Petit-Nesle. Ascanio followed him.

He had to cross a second courtyard, pass through a second door, then cross a small flower-garden, ascend a flight of steps, and traverse a long gallery. At the end of the gallery the gardener opened the door and said:—

“Dame Perrine, here is a young gentleman, who asks to inspect the hotel, in the king’s name.”

With that he stood aside and made room for Ascanio, who took his place in the doorway.

As he glanced into the room, a cloud passed before his eyes, and he leaned against the door frame for support. A very simple, and yet entirely unforeseen thing had happened; Dame Perrine was with Colombe, and he found himself in the presence of both.

Dame Perrine was sitting at the spinning-wheel, spinning. Colombe was at work at her embroidery frame. They raised their heads at the same instant and looked toward the door.

Colombe instantly recognized Ascanio. She expected him, although her reason told her that he was not likely to come. As for him, when he saw the maiden’s eyes raised to his face, although their expression was infinitely soft and sweet, it seemed to him that he was dying.

The fact is, that he had anticipated a thousand difficulties, had dreamed of a thousand obstacles to be surmounted before he could win his way to his beloved. Those obstacles would have aroused all his energy and strengthened his resolution; and lo! everything came about as naturally and simply as if God, touched by the purity of his passion, had smiled upon it and blessed it from the first. He found himself in her presence when

he was least expecting it, and of all the beautiful speech he had prepared, the fervent eloquence of which was to amaze and move her, he could not recall a phrase, a word, a syllable.

Colombe, for her part, sat motionless and dumb. The two pure-souled young creatures, who, as if they had been already joined in wedlock in heaven, felt that they belonged to one another, and who, when once their lives had brought them close together, would thenceforth form, like Salmacis and Hermaphrodite, but one existence, were terrified at their first meeting, trembled, hesitated, and stood face to face unable to find words.

Dame Perrine, half rising from her chair, and preparing to put aside her spinning, was the first to break the silence.

"What did that blockhead Raimbault say?" cried the worthy duenna. "Did you hear, Colombe?" As Colombe did not reply, she continued, walking toward Ascanio: "What is your pleasure here, my young master? Why, God forgive me!" she suddenly exclaimed, as she recognized the visitor, "it's the gallant youth who so politely handed me the holy water at the church door these last three Sundays! What is your pleasure, my handsome friend?"

"I would be glad to speak with you," faltered Ascanio.

"With me alone?" queried Dame Perrine coquettishly.

"With you — alone —"

As he made this reply Ascanio told himself that he was a consummate ass.

"Come this way, then, young man," said Dame Perrine, opening a door at the side of the room, and signing to Ascanio to follow her.

Ascanio did as she bade him, but as he left the room he cast upon Colombe one of those long, eloquent glances wherein lovers can say so much, and which, however

unintelligible they may be to indifferent observers, are always understood at last by the person to whom they are addressed. Colombe undoubtedly lost no portion of its meaning, for her eyes, how she knew not, having met the youth's, she blushed prodigiously, and when she felt that she was blushing, she cast her eyes down upon her embroidery, and began to mangle a poor inoffensive flower. Ascanio saw the blush, and, stopping abruptly, stepped toward Colombe; but at that moment Dame Perrine turned and called him, and he was compelled to follow her.

He had no sooner crossed the threshold of the door than Colombe dropped her needle, let her arms fall beside her chair, threw back her head, and breathed a long sigh, in which were mingled, by one of those inexplicable miracles which the heart alone can perform, regret at Ascanio's departure, and a sort of relief to feel that he was no longer there.

The young man was very perceptibly in a bad humor; with Benvenuto, who had given him such a strange commission to fulfil; with himself, for his inability to take advantage of his opportunity; but most of all with Dame Perrine, who was cruel enough to make him leave the room just when Colombe's eyes seemed to bid him remain.

So it was that, when the duenna inquired as to the purpose of his visit, Ascanio replied in a most deliberate manner, determined to be revenged upon her for his own bungling:—

“The purpose of my visit, my dear Madame, is to beg you to show me the Hôtel de Nesle from one end to the other.”

“Show you the Hôtel de Nesle!” cried Dame Perrine; “why, in Heaven's name, do you desire to see it?”

"To see if it will be convenient for us, if we shall be comfortable here, and if it is worth while for us to leave our present quarters to come and live here."

"What! come and live here! Pray have you hired the hotel of Monsieur le Prévôt?"

"No, but his Majesty gives it to us."

"His Majesty gives it to you!" exclaimed Dame Perrine, more and more amazed.

"Absolutely," replied Ascanio.

"To you?"

"Not precisely, my good woman, but to my master."

"And who is your master, if I may ask, young man? Some great foreign nobleman, no doubt?"

"Better than that, Dame Perrine, — a great artist, come hither from Florence, expressly to serve his Most Christian Majesty."

"Aha!" said the good woman, who did not understand very well; "what does your master make?"

"What does he make? Why, he makes everything: rings to put on maidens' fingers; ewers to put upon kings' tables; statues to place in the temples of the gods; and in his leisure moments he besieges or defends cities, as his caprice leads him to cause an emperor to tremble, or to reassure a pope."

"Jésus Dieu!" cried Dame Perrine: "what is your master's name?"

"His name is Benvenuto Cellini."

"It's strange that I don't know that name," muttered the duenna; "what is his profession?"

"He is a goldsmith."

Dame Perrine gazed wonderingly at Ascanio.

"A goldsmith!" she muttered, "a goldsmith! And do you fancy that Monsieur le Prévôt will give up his palace like this to a — goldsmith?"

"If he does n't give it up, we will take it."

"By force?"

"Even so."

"But your master will hardly dare to contend against Monsieur le Prévôt, I trust."

"He has contended against three dukes and two popes."

"Jésus Dieu! Two popes! He's not a heretic surely?"

"He is as good a Catholic as you and I, Dame Perrine: have no fear on that score; Satan is in no wise our ally. But in default of the devil, we have the king on our side."

"So! but Monsieur le Prévôt has a more powerful protector than the king."

"Whom has he, pray?"

"Madame d'Etampes."

"Then we are on equal terms," said Ascanio.

"But suppose Messire d'Estourville refuses?"

"Master Benvenuto will take."

"And suppose Messire d'Estourville shuts himself up here as in a citadel?"

"Master Cellini will lay siege to it."

"Consider that the provost has twenty-four sergeants-at-arms."

"Master Benvenuto Cellini has ten apprentices: still we are on equal terms, you see, Dame Perrine."

"But Messire d'Estourville is personally a sturdy fighter. At the tournament which took place at the time of the marriage of François I., he was one of the challengers, and all those who dared measure swords with him were unhorsed."

"Ah well! Dame Perrine, then he is just the man for Benvenuto, who has never met his match, and who

like Messire d'Estourville, always unhorses his adversaries. But there is this difference between them: a fortnight afterward, they who have encountered your provost are on their legs again in good health and spirits, while they who have my master to deal with never raise their heads again, and three days after are dead and buried."

"Evil will come of this! evil will come of this!" muttered Dame Perrine. "Young man, they say that fearful things are done in cities taken by assault."

"Have no fear on that head, Dame Perrine," rejoined Ascanio with a smile. "You will have to do with generous conquerors."

"What I mean, my dear child," said Dame Perrine, who was not sorry perhaps, to secure a friend among the besiegers, "is that I fear there may be bloodshed; for, so far as your proximity to us is concerned, you will understand that it cannot fail to be very agreeable to us, since society is somewhat scanty in this accursed desert to which Messire d'Estourville has consigned his daughter and myself, like two wretched nuns, although neither she nor I have taken the vows, thank God! It isn't good for man to be alone, so saith Holy Writ, and when Holy Writ mentions man, woman is included. Is not that your opinion, young man?"

"That goes without saying."

"And we are entirely alone, and therefore very doleful in this vast habitation."

"Why, do you receive no visitors here?" Ascanio asked.

"Jésus Dieu! it's worse than if we were nuns, as I told you. Nuns have parents at least, and friends who come and talk to them through the grating. They have the refectory where they can assemble and talk together. It's not very diverting, I know, but it's something never-

theless. But we have only Messire le Prévôt, who comes from time to time to lecture his daughter for growing too lovely, I think, — it's her only crime, poor child, — and to scold me because I don't watch her closely enough, — God save the mark ! when she does n't see a living soul in the world except myself, and, aside from what she says to me, does n't open her mouth except to pray. I beg you, therefore, young man, not to say to any one that you have been admitted here, that you have inspected the Grand-Nesle under my guidance, or that you talked with us for an instant at the Petit-Nesle."

"What!" cried Ascanio, "after our visit to the Grand-Nesle, I am to return with you to the Petit? In that case I shall — " He checked himself, realizing that his joy was carrying him too far.

"I think it would not be courteous, young man, after presenting yourself, as you did, to Mademoiselle Colombe, who is the mistress of the house in her father's absence, and after asking to speak with me alone, — I do not think it would be courteous, I say, to leave the Hôtel de Nesle without taking leave of her. But if you prefer not to do so, you are quite at liberty, as you know, to go into the street directly from the Grand-Nesle, which has its own exit."

"No, no, no indeed!" cried Ascanio, eagerly. "Peste! I flatter myself, Dame Perrine, that I have been as well brought up as anybody on earth, and that I know what good breeding requires in one's treatment of ladies. But, let us do what we have to do, Dame Perrine, without a moment's delay, for I am in very great haste."

Indeed, now that Ascanio knew that he was to return by way of the Petit-Nesle he was in a great hurry to be done with the Grand. And as Dame Perrine was terribly afraid of being surprised by the provost when she

least expected it, she had no inclination to delay Ascanio! so she took down a bunch of keys from behind a door, and walked on before him.

Let us, in company with Ascanio, cast a hasty glance at this Hôtel de Nesle, where the principal scenes of our narrative will be laid.

The Hôtel, or rather the Séjour de Nesle, as it was more commonly called at that time, occupied, as our readers already know, the site on the left bank of the Seine, on which the Hôtel de Nevers was subsequently built, to be in its turn succeeded by the Mint and the Institute. It was the last building in Paris toward the southwest, and beyond its walls nothing could be seen save the city moat, and the verdant lawns of the Pré-aux-Cleres. It was built by Amaury, Lord of Nesle in Picardie, toward the close of the eighth century. Philippe le Bel bought it in 1308 and made it his royal residence. In 1520 the Tour de Nesle, of bloody and licentious memory, was separated from it, when the quay, the bridge over the moat, and the Porte de Nesle were constructed, and thenceforth the grim tower stood alone upon the river bank, like a sinner doing penance.

But the Séjour de Nesle luckily was so vast that the lopping off of part of it was not noticed. It was as large as a small village; a high wall, pierced by a broad ogive door and a smaller servants' door, protected it on the side of the quay. On entering you found yourself at first in an immense courtyard surrounded by walls; there was a door in the wall at the left, and one at the back. Passing through the door at the left, as Ascanio did, you came to a charming little building in the Gothic style of the fourteenth century; it was the Petit-Nesle, which had its own separate garden. If, on the other hand, you passed through the door in the rear wall, you saw

at your right the Grand-Nesle, — all of stone, and flanked by two turrets, — with its high peaked roofs, surrounded by balustrades, its angular façade, its high windows with glass of many colors, and its twenty weather-vanes crying in the wind ; there was room enough to provide accommodation for three bankers of to-day.

If you went on, you lost yourself in all sorts of gardens, and you found among them a tennis-court, a bowling-green, a foundry, and an arsenal ; and still farther on the stable-yards, stables, cattle-sheds, and sheepfolds ; there was accommodation for the establishments of three farmers of to-day.

The whole property, it should be said, was sadly neglected, and consequently in very bad condition, for Raimbault and his two assistants hardly sufficed to take proper care of the garden belonging to the Petit-Nesle, where Colombe raised flowers, and Dame Perrine vegetables. But the whole was of vast extent, well lighted, and substantially built, and with a slight outlay of trouble and money, it could be made the finest workshop in the world.

Even if the place had been infinitely less suitable, Ascanio would have been none the less enchanted with it, as his principal desire was to be brought near to Colombe.

His visit to the larger building was made very short : in less time than it takes to write it, the active youth saw everything that there was to see, and formed an opinion upon everything that he saw. Dame Perrine, finding it impossible to keep pace with him, good-naturedly handed him the keys, which he faithfully restored to her when his investigation was at an end.

“Now, Dame Perrine,” said he, “I am at your service.”

"Very good: let us return for a moment to the Petit-Nesle, as you agree with me that it is the proper thing to do."

"I should say as much! It would be extremely discourteous to do otherwise."

"But not a word to Colombe of the object of your visit."

"Mon Dieu! what shall I say to her, then?" cried Ascanio.

"You're easily embarrassed, my handsome lad. Did you not tell me that you are a goldsmith?"

"Indeed, yes."

"Very well, talk to her about jewels; that is a subject that always gladdens the heart of the most virtuous maiden. She is or is not a true daughter of Eve, and if she is a true daughter of Eve she loves anything that glitters. Besides, she has so little diversion in her solitude, poor child! that it would be a blessing to entertain her a little. To be sure, the most suitable entertainment for a girl of her age would be a good marriage; and Master Robert never comes hither that I do not whisper in his ear, 'Find a husband for the poor dear; pray find a husband for her.'"

Without stopping to consider what conjectures as to the relations between herself and the provost might be set on foot by this declaration of her familiar manner of addressing him, Dame Perrine led the way back to the Petit-Nesle and to the room where they had left Colombe.

Colombe was still absorbed in thought, and in the same attitude in which we left her. But no one knows how many times she had raised her head and fixed her eyes upon the door through which the comely youth had gone from her sight; any one who had observed these

oft-repeated glances might have thought that she was expecting him. But as she saw the door turning upon its hinges, Colombe went about her work once more so earnestly that neither Dame Perrine nor Ascanio could suspect that it had been interrupted.

How she had divined that the young man was following the duenna is something that might have been explained by magnetism, if magnetism had then been invented.

"I bring back with me our donor of holy water, my dear Colombe, for he it is, as I thought. I was about to show him out by the door of the Grand-Nesle, when he reminded me that he had not taken leave of you. It was true enough, for you didn't say one little word to each other before. However, neither of you is dumb, God be praised!"

"Dame Perrine —" faltered Colombe, greatly embarrassed.

"Well! what is it? You must not blush like that. Monsieur Ascanio is an honorable young man, as you are a virtuous young woman. Furthermore, it seems that he is an artist in jewels, precious stones, and such gewgaws as suit the fancy of most pretty girls. He will come and show them to you, my child, if you wish."

"I need nothing," murmured Colombe.

"Possibly not at this moment; but it is to be hoped that you will not die a recluse in this accursed solitude. We are but sixteen years old, Colombe, and the day will come when we shall be a lovely *fiancée*, to whom all sorts of jewels will be presented, and after that a great lady, who must have all sorts of finery. When that time comes, it will be as well to give the preference to this youth's as to those of some other artist, who surely will not be comparable to him."

Colombe was on the rack. Ascanio, to whom Dame Perrine's forecasts of the future were but moderately pleasing, noticed her suffering, and came to the rescue of the poor child, to whom direct conversation was a thousand times less embarrassing than this monologue by a self-constituted interpreter.

"Oh ! mademoiselle," said he, "do not deny me the great privilege of bringing some of my handiwork to you ; it seems to me now as if I made them for you, and as if when making them I was thinking of you. Oh ! believe it, I pray you, for we artists in jewels sometimes mingle our own thoughts with the gold and silver and precious stones. In the diadems with which your heads are crowned, the bracelets which encircle your white arms, the necklaces which rest so lovingly upon your shoulders, in the flowers, the birds, the angels, the chimeras, which we make to tremble at your ears, we sometimes embody our respectful adoration."

It is our duty as an historian to state that at these soft words Colombe's heart dilated, for Ascanio, mute so long, was speaking at last, and speaking as she had dreamed that he would speak ; for without raising her eyes the girl could feel his burning glance fixed upon her, and there was nothing, even to the unfamiliar tone of his voice, which did not impart a singular charm to these words which sounded so strangely in Colombe's ears, and a profound and irresistible meaning to the flowing, harmonious language of love, which maidens understand before they can speak it.

"I know," Ascanio continued, with his eyes still fixed upon Colombe, "I know that we can add nothing to your beauty. God is made none the richer by decking out his altar. But we can at least surround your graceful form with those things which are attractive and

beautiful like itself ; and when we poor, humble artificers of splendor and enchantment from the depths of our obscurity see you pass by in a blaze of glory, we console ourselves for being so far below you by the thought that our art has helped to raise you to the height whereon you stand."

"O Monsieur !" replied Colombe, covered with confusion, "your lovely things will probably be always unfamiliar to me, or at least useless. I live in solitude and obscurity, and so far is it from being the case that the solitude and obscurity are oppressive to me, that I confess that I love them, I confess that I would like to live here always, and yet I also confess that I would like well to see your jewels, not for myself but for them, — not to wear them, but to admire them."

Trembling with fear lest she had said too much, and perhaps with a longing to say even more, Colombe bowed and left the room so swiftly, that to the eyes of a man more knowing in such matters her exit would have worn the aspect of a flight.

"Well, well !" exclaimed Dame Perrine ; "that's not a long way from something like coquetry. There is no doubt, young man, that you talk like a book. Yes, yes, one can but believe that you Italians have secret means of fascinating people. No stronger proof is needed than this, — that you have enlisted me on your side at once, and 'pon honor, I find myself wishing that Messire le Prévôt will not deal too hardly with you. *Au revoir*, young man, and bid your master be on his guard. Warn him that Messire d'Estourville is as hard of heart as the devil, and wields great influence at court. For which reason, if your master will take my advice, he will abandon all thought of living at the Grand-Nesle, and especially of taking forcible possession of it. As for you —

but we shall see you again, shall we not? Above all, do not believe Colombe; the property of her deceased mother is sufficient to enable her to indulge in baubles twenty times more costly than those you offer her. And look you, bring also some less elaborate articles; it may occur to her to make me a little present. I am not yet, thank God! so old that I need decline a little flirtation. You understand, do you not?"

Deeming it necessary, the better to make her meaning clear, to enforce her words with a gesture, she laid her hand upon the young man's arm. Ascanio jumped like one suddenly awakened from a sound sleep. Indeed, it seemed to him as if it were all a dream. He could not realize that he was under Colombe's roof, and he doubted whether the white apparition whose melodious voice was still whispering in his ear, whose slender form had just vanished from his sight, was really she for one glance from whose eyes he would have given his life that morning.

Overflowing with his present happiness and his future prospects, he promised Dame Perrine whatever she wished, without even listening to what she asked him to do. What mattered it to him? Was he not ready to give all that he possessed to see Colombe once more?

Thinking that to prolong his visit would be unbecoming, he took leave of Dame Perrine, promising to return the next day.

As he left the Petit-Nesle, Ascanio almost collided with two men who were about to enter. By the way in which one of them stared at him, even more than by his costume, he felt sure that it was the provost.

His suspicion was changed to certainty when he saw them knock at the same door by which he had just come out, and he regretted that he had not sooner taken his

leave ; for who could say that his imprudence would not be visited upon Colombe ?

To negative the idea that his visit was of any importance, assuming that the provost noticed it, Ascanio walked away without once turning to look back toward the only corner of the world of which he would at that moment have cared to be king.

When he returned to the studio, he found Benvenuto absorbed in thought. The man who stopped them in the street was Primaticcio, and he was on his way, like the honorable confrère he was, to inform Cellini that, during the visit François I. paid him that morning, the imprudent artist had succeeded in making a mortal enemy of Madame la Duchesse d'Etampes.

VII

A LOVER AND A FRIEND.

ONE of the two men who entered the Hôtel de Nesle as Ascanio emerged therefrom was indeed Messire Robert d'Estourville, Provost of Paris. Who the other was we shall learn in a moment.

Five minutes after Ascanio's departure, while Colombe was still listening and dreaming in her bedroom, whither she had fled, Dame Perrine hurriedly entered, and informed the young woman that her father was awaiting her in the adjoining room.

"My father!" cried Colombe in alarm. "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" she added in an undertone, "can it be that he met him?"

"Yes, your father, my dear child," rejoined Dame Perrine, replying to the only portion of the sentence that she heard, "and with him another old man whom I do not know."

"Another old man!" exclaimed Colombe, shuddering instinctively. "Mon Dieu! Dame Perrine, what does it mean? It is the first time in two or three years that my father has not come hither alone."

However, notwithstanding her alarm she could but obey, knowing as she did her father's impatient disposition, so she summoned all her courage and returned to the room she had just left with a smile upon her lips. Despite this feeling of dread, which she experienced for the first time and could not explain, she loved Messire

d'Estourville as a daughter should love her father, and although his demeanor toward her was far from expansive, the days on which he visited the Hôtel de Nesle were marked as red-letter days among the uniformly gloomy days of her life.

Colombe went forward with outstretched arms and her mouth half open, but the provost gave her no time either to embrace him or to speak. He took her hand, and led her to the stranger, who was leaning against the flower-laden mantel.

"My dear friend," he said, "I present my daughter to you. Colombe," he added, "this is Comte d'Orbec, the king's treasurer and your future husband."

Colombe uttered a feeble exclamation, which she at once stifled, out of regard for the requirements of courtesy ; but feeling her knees giving way beneath her, she leaned against the back of a chair for support.

Fully to understand the horror of this unexpected presentation, especially in Colombe's then frame of mind, it is necessary to know what manner of man this Comte d'Orbec was.

Messire Robert d'Estourville, Colombe's father, was certainly far from handsome ; there was in his bushy eyebrows, which he drew together at the least obstacle, physical or moral, that he encountered, a savage expression, and in his whole thickset figure something heavy and awkward, which caused one to feel but slightly prepossessed in his favor ; but beside Comte d'Orbec he seemed like Saint Michael the Archangel beside the dragon. The square head and the strongly accentuated features of the provost did at least indicate resolution and force of character, while his small, piercing gray lynx eyes denoted intelligence ; but Comte d'Orbec, lean and withered, with his long arms like spider's claws his mosquito-

like voice and his snail-like movements, was not only ugly, he was absolutely hideous ; — it was the ugliness of the beast and the villain in one. His head was carried on one side, and his face wore a villanous smile and a treacherous expression.

So it was that Colombe, at the sight of this revolting creature, who was presented to her as her future husband when her heart and her thoughts and her eyes were still filled with the comely youth who had just gone from that very room, could not, as we have seen, wholly repress an exclamation of dismay ; but her strength failed her, and she stood there pale and speechless, gazing terror-stricken into her father's face.

"I beseech you to pardon Colombe's confusion, dear friend," the provost continued ; "in the first place, she is a little barbarian, who has not been away from here these two years past, the air of the time being not over healthy, as you know, for attractive maids ; secondly, I have made the mistake of not informing her of our plans, which would have been time lost, however, since what I have determined upon needs no person's approval before being put in execution ; and lastly, she knows not who you are, and that with your name, your great wealth, and the favor of Madame d'Etampes, you are in a position where everything is possible ; but upon reflection she will appreciate the honor you confer upon us in consenting to ally your ancient blood with our nobility of more recent date ; she will learn that friends of forty years' standing — "

"Enough, my dear fellow, enough, in God's name !" interposed the count. "Come, come, my child," he added, addressing Colombe with familiar and insolent assurance, which formed a striking contrast to poor Ascanio's timidity, — "come, compose yourself and call back to your

cheeks a little of the lovely coloring that so becomes you. Mon Dieu! I know what a young girl is, you know, and a young woman too for that matter, for I have already been married twice, my dear. Good lack! you must not be disturbed like this: I don't frighten you, I hope, eh?" added the count fatuously, passing his fingers through his scanty moustache and imperial. "Your father did wrong to give me the title of husband so suddenly, which always agitates a youthful heart a little when it hears it for the first time; but you will come to it, little one, and will end by saying it yourself with that sweet little mouth of yours. Well! well! you are growing paler and paler, — God forgive me! I believe she is fainting."

As he spoke D'Orbec put out his arms to support her, but she stood erect, and stepped back as if she feared his touch no less than a serpent's, finding strength to utter a few words: —

"Pardon, monsieur, pardon, father," she faltered; "forgive me, it is nothing; but I thought, I hoped —"

"What did you think, what did you hope? Come, tell us quickly!" rejoined the provost, fixing his sharp eyes, snapping angrily, upon his daughter.

"That you would allow me to stay with you always, father," replied Colombe. "Since my poor mother's death, you have no one else to love you and care for you, and I had thought —"

"Hold your peace, Colombe," retorted the provost imperatively. "I am not old enough as yet to need a keeper, and you have arrived at the proper age to have an establishment of your own.

"Bon Dieu!" interposed D'Orbec, joining once more in the conversation, "accept me without so much ado, my love. With me you will be as happy as one can be, and

more than one will envy you, I swear. *Mordieu!* I am rich, and I propose that you shall be a credit to me; you shall go to court, and shall wear jewels that will arouse the envy, I will not say of the queen, but of *Madame d'Etampes* herself."

I know not what thoughts these last words awoke in *Colombe's* heart, but the color returned to her cheeks, and she made bold to answer the count, despite her father's harsh and threatening glance:—

"I will ask my father, *monseigneur*, at least to give me time to reflect upon your proposal."

"What's that?" cried *Messire d'Estourville* violently. "Not an hour, not a minute. You are from this moment the count's betrothed, understand that, and you would be his wife this evening were it not that he is obliged to pay a visit to his estates in *Normandie*, and you know that my wishes are commands. Reflect indeed! *Sarpejeu!* *D'Orbee*, let us leave her ladyship. From this moment, my friend, she is yours, and you may claim her when you will. And now let us go and inspect your future abode."

D'Orbee would have been glad to tarry and add a word to what he had already said, but the provost passed his arm through his, and led him away grumbling; he contented himself therefore with saluting *Colombe* with his wicked smile, and went out with *Messire Robert*.

Behind them *Dame Perrine* entered through another door; she had heard the provost speaking in a loud voice, and guessed that he was as usual scolding his daughter. She arrived in time to receive *Colombe* in her arms.

"O mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" sobbed the poor child, putting her hand over her eyes as if to avoid the sight of the odious *D'Orbee*, absent though he was. "O mon

Dieu! is this to be the end? O my golden dreams! O my poor hopes! All is lost, and naught remains for me but to die!"

We need not ask if this lament, added to Colombe's weakness and pallor, terrified Dame Perrine, and at the same time aroused her curiosity. As Colombe sadly needed to relieve her overburdened heart, she described to her worthy governess, weeping the while the bitterest tears she had ever shed, the interview between her father, Comte d'Orbec, and herself. Dame Perrine agreed that the suitor was not young or handsome, but as the worst misfortune, in her opinion, that could happen to a woman was to remain single, she insisted that it was better, when all was said, to have an old and ugly, but wealthy and influential husband, than none at all. But this doctrine was so offensive to Colombe's heart, that she withdrew to her own room, leaving Dame Perrine, whose imagination was most active, to build innumerable castles in the air in anticipation of the day when she should rise from the rank of Mademoiselle Colombe's governess to that of Comtesse d'Orbec's *dame de compagnie*.

Meanwhile the provost and the count were beginning their tour of inspection of the Grand-Nesle, as Dame Perrine and Ascanio had done an hour earlier.

Curious results would follow if walls, which are commonly supposed to have ears, had also eyes and a tongue, and could repeat to those who enter what they have seen and heard on the part of those who have gone before.

But as the walls held their peace, and simply looked at the provost and the treasurer, laughing perhaps, after the manner of walls, it was the treasurer who spoke.

"On my word," he said, as they crossed the courtyard leading from the Petit to the Grand-Nesle, "on my word, the little one will do very well; she is just such a

woman as I need, my dear D'Estourville, virtuous, well-bred, and ignorant. When the first storm has passed over, time will straighten out everything, believe me. I know how it is; every little girl dreams of a young, handsome, clever, and wealthy husband. Mon Dieu! I have at least half of the requisite qualities. Few men can say as much, so that's a great point in my favor." Passing from his future wife to the property he was to occupy, and speaking with the same shrill, greedy accent of the one as of the other, "This old Nesle," he continued, "is a magnificent habitation, on my honor! and I congratulate you upon it. We shall be marvellously comfortable here, my wife and I, and my whole treasury. Here we will have our own apartments, there will be my offices, and over yonder the servants' quarters. The place as a whole has been allowed to run to seed. But with the expenditure of a little money, which we will find a way to make his Majesty pay, we will give a good account of ourselves. By the way, D'Estourville, are you perfectly sure of retaining the property? You should take steps to perfect your title to it; so far as I now remember, the king did not give it you, after all."

"He did not give it me, true," replied the provost with a laugh, "but he let me take it, which is much the same thing."

"Very good; but suppose that some other should play you the trick of making a formal request for it from him."

"Ah! such a one would be very ill received, I promise you, when he should come to take possession, and, being sure as I am of Madame d'Etampes's support and yours, I would make him sorely repent his pretensions. No, no, my dear fellow, my mind is at ease, and the Hôtel de Nesle belongs to me as truly as my daughter

Colombe belongs to you ; go, therefore, without fear on that score, and return quickly."

As the provost uttered these words, the truth of which neither he nor his interlocutor had any reason to doubt, a third personage, escorted by Raimbault the gardener, appeared upon the threshold of the door leading from the quadrangular courtyard into the gardens of the Petit-Nesle. It was the Vicomte de Marmagne.

He also was a suitor for Colombe's hand, but by no means a favored one. He was a fair-haired scamp, with a pink face, consequential, insolent, garrulous, forever boasting of his relations with women, who often used him as a cloak for their serious amours, overflowing with pride in his post of secretary to the king, which permitted him to approach his Majesty in the same way in which his greyhounds and parrots and monkeys approached him. The provost, therefore, was not deceived by his apparent favor and the superficial familiarity of his relations with his Majesty, which favor and familiarity he owed, so it was said, to his decidedly unmoral additions to the duties of his post. Furthermore, the Vicomte de Marmagne had long since devoured all his patrimony, and had no other fortune than the liberality of François. Now it might happen any day that this liberal disposition would cease, so far as he was concerned, and Messire Robert d'Estourville was not fool enough to rely, in matters of such importance, upon the caprice of a very capricious monarch. He had therefore gently denied the suit of the Vicomte de Marmagne, admitting to him confidentially and under the seal of secrecy that his daughter's hand had long been promised to another. Thanks to this confidential communication, which supplied a motive for the provost's refusal, the Vicomte de Marmagne and Messire Robert d'Estourville had continued to be in ap-

pearance the best friends in the world, although from that day the viscount detested the provost, and the provost was suspicious of the viscount, who could not succeed in concealing his rancor beneath an affable and smiling exterior from a man so accustomed as Messire Robert to peer into the dark corners of courts, and the deepest depths of men's hearts. So it was that, whenever the viscount made his appearance, the provost expected to find in him, notwithstanding his invariably affable and engaging demeanor, a bearer of bad news, which he would always impart with tears in his eyes, and with the feigned, premeditated grief which squeezes out poison upon a wound, drop by drop.

As for Comte d'Orbec, the Vicomte de Marmagne had wellnigh come to an open rupture with him; it was one of the rare instances of court enmities visible to the naked eye. D'Orbec despised Marmagne, because Marmagne had no fortune and could make no display. Marmagne despised D'Orbec, because D'Orbec was old and had consequently lost the power of making himself agreeable to women; in fine, they mutually detested each other, because, whenever they met upon the same path, one of them had taken something from the other.

So it was that when they met on this occasion the two courtiers greeted each other with that cold, sardonic smile which is never seen save in palace antechambers, and which means, "Ah! if we were n't a pair of cowards, how long ago one of us would have ceased to live!"

Nevertheless, as it is the historian's duty to set down everything, good and bad alike, it is proper to state that they confined themselves to this salutation and this smile, and that Comte d'Orbec, escorted by the provost, and without exchanging a word with Marmagne, left the

house immediately by the same door by which his enemy entered.

Let us hasten to add, that, notwithstanding the hatred which kept them asunder, these two men were ready, in case of need, to unite temporarily to destroy a third.

Comte d'Orbec having taken his leave, the provost found himself *tête-à-tête* with the Vicomte de Marmagne. He walked toward him with a joyous countenance, in striking contrast to the melancholy visage with which the other awaited him.

"Well, my dear provost," said Marmagne, to open the conversation, "you seem in extremely good spirits."

"While you, my dear Marmagne," rejoined the provost, "seem sadly depressed."

"Simply because, as you know, my poor D'Estourville, my friends' misfortunes afflict me as keenly as my own."

"Yes, yes, I know your heart," said the provost.

"And when I saw you in such a joyous mood, with your future son-in-law, Comte d'Orbec, — for your daughter's betrothal to him is no longer a secret, and I congratulate you upon it, my dear D'Estourville —"

"You know that I told you long ago that Colombe's hand was promised, my dear Marmagne."

"Yes, but, 'pon honor, I cannot understand how you can consent to part from such a fascinating child."

"Oh! I do not propose to part from her," replied Messire Robert. "My son-in-law, Comte d'Orbec, will bring his whole establishment across the Seine, and will take up his abode at the Grand-Nesle, while I shall spend my unoccupied moments at the Petit."

"My poor friend!" exclaimed Marmagne, shaking his head with an air of profound sadness, and placing one hand upon the provost's arm while with the other he wiped away a tear which did not exist.

"Why 'poor friend'?" demanded Messire Robert
"Come! what have you to tell me now?"

"Am I the first, pray, to tell you the unpleasant news?"

"What is it? Speak out!"

"You know, my dear provost, that we must take things philosophically in this world, and there is an old proverb which we poor weak mortals should keep constantly in mind, for it sums up the accumulated wisdom of all nations."

"What is the proverb? Say what you have to say."

"Man proposes, my dear friend, man proposes, and God disposes."

"In God's name, what have I proposed for him to dispose of? Say on, I beg you, and let us have done with it."

"You have intended the Grand-Nesle for the residence of your daughter and son-in-law?"

"Most assuredly; and I trust that they will be installed there within three months."

"Undeceive yourself, my dear provost, undeceive yourself; the Hôtel de Nesle is no longer your property at this moment. Pardon me for afflicting you thus, but I thought, knowing your somewhat hasty nature, that it would be better for you to learn the news from the mouth of a friend, who would spare your feelings in the telling as much as possible, rather than from some malicious fellow, who would take a keen delight in your misfortune, and brutally cast it in your face. Alas! no, my friend, the Grand-Nesle is yours no longer."

"Who has taken it from me, I pray to know?"

"His Majesty."

"His Majesty!"

"Himself, so you see that the disaster is irreparable."

"When was it done?"

"This morning. If I had not been detained by my duties at the Louvre, you would have been sooner apprised of it."

"You are mistaken, Marmagne; it's some false report set afloat by my enemies, and which you are in too great haste to repeat."

"I would be glad for many reasons if it were so, but unfortunately I was not told of it; I heard it."

"You heard it? what?"

"I heard the king with his own mouth present the Grand-Nesle to another."

"Who is this other?"

"An Italian adventurer, a paltry goldsmith, whose name you perhaps have heard; an intriguing rascal named Benvenuto Cellini, who came from Florence some two months since, whom the king has taken upon his shoulders for some unknown reason, and to whom he paid a visit to-day with his whole court at the Cardinal of Ferrara's hotel, where this pretended artist has established his studio."

"And you say that you were present, viscount, when the king presented the Grand-Nesle to this wretch?"

"I was," replied Marmagne, pronouncing the words very slowly and distinctly, and dwelling upon them with evident relish.

"Oho!" said the provost, "very good! I am ready for your adventurer: let him come and take possession of his royal gift."

"Do you mean that you would offer resistance?"

"To be sure!"

"To an order of the king?"

"To an order of God or the devil, — to any order, in short, which should undertake to eject me from this place."

"Softly, provost, softly," said Marmagne, "over and above the king's wrath, to which you expose yourself, this Benvenuto Cellini is in himself more to be feared than you think."

"Do you know who I am, viscount?"

"First of all, he stands very high in his Majesty's good graces, — only for the moment, to be sure, — but it is none the less true."

"Do you know that I, the Provost of Paris, represent his Majesty at the Châtelet, that I sit there beneath a canopy, in a short coat and a cloak with a collar, with my sword at my side, a hat with waving plumes on my head, and in my hand a staff covered with blue velvet?"

"Secondly, I will tell you that this accursed Italian makes no scruple of offering combat, as if he stood on equal terms with them, to princes, cardinals, and popes."

"Do you know that I have a private seal which imparts the fullest authority to those documents to which it is affixed?"

"It is said, furthermore, that the damned bully wounds or kills recklessly every one who ventures to oppose him."

"Do you not know that a body guard of twenty-four men-at-arms is at my orders night and day?"

"They say that he attacked a goldsmith against whom he had a grudge, although he was surrounded by a guard of sixty men."

"You forget that the Hôtel de Nesle is fortified, that the walls are crenellated, and there are machicoulis above the doors, to say nothing of the city fortifications which render it impregnable on one side."

"It is said that he is as thoroughly at home in the science of sieges as Bayard or Antonio de Leyra."

"As to that we shall see."

"I am sorely afraid."

"I will bide my time."

"Look you, my dear friend, will you allow me to offer you a little advice?"

"Say on, so that it be brief."

"Do not try to struggle with one who is stronger than you."

"Stronger than I, a paltry Italian mechanic! Viscount, you exasperate me!"

"You may find reason to repent, 'pon honor! I speak whereof I know."

"Viscount, you try my temper."

"Consider that the fellow has the king on his side."

"And I have Madame d'Etampes."

"His Majesty may take it ill of you to resist his will."

"I have already done it, Monsieur, and successfully."

"Yes, I know, in the matter of the toll at the bridge of Mantes. But —"

"But what?"

"One risks nothing, or very little at all events, in resisting a weak, good-natured king, while one risks everything in entering into a contest with a powerful, formidable opponent like Benvenuto Cellini."

"By Mahomet's belly, Viscount, do you propose to drive me mad?"

"On the contrary, my purpose is to make you discreet."

"Enough, Viscount, enough! Ah! the villain shall pay dear, I swear, for these moments that your friendship has caused me to pass."

"God grant it, Provost! God grant it!"

"Very good, very good! You have nothing else to tell me?"

"No, no, I believe not," the viscount replied, as if he

were trying to recall some item of news which would make a fitting pendant to the other.

"Very well, adieu!" cried the provost.

"Adieu, my poor friend!"

"Adieu!"

"At all events I have given you warning."

"Adieu!"

"I shall have no reason to reproach myself: that consoles me."

"Adieu! adieu!"

"Good luck attend you! But I must say that I express that wish with but little hope of its being gratified."

"Adieu! adieu! adieu!"

"Adieu!"

And the Vicomte de Marmagne, sighing as if his heart would burst, and with grief-stricken face, took his departure, gesticulating mournfully, after he had pressed the provost's hand as if he were saying farewell to him forever.

The provost followed him, and with his own hands secured the street door behind him.

It will readily be understood that this friendly conversation had heated Messire d'Estourville's blood and stirred his bile to an extreme degree. He was looking around in search of some one upon whom he might vent his ill-humor, when he suddenly remembered the young man whom he had seen emerging from the Grand-Nesle as he entered with Comte d'Orbec. As Rimbault was at hand he had not far to seek for one who could answer his questions touching that stranger, so he summoned the gardener with one of those imperative gestures which admit no delay, and asked him what he knew about the young man.

The gardener replied that the individual to whom his master referred had presented himself in the king's name, to inspect the Grand-Nesle; that he did not consider it his duty to take anything upon himself, and therefore referred him to Dame Perrine, who good-naturedly showed him over the whole establishment.

The provost thereupon rushed to the Petit-Nesle to demand an explanation from the worthy duenna, but she unfortunately had just gone out to purchase the weekly supply of provisions.

There remained Colombe, but as the provost could not believe that she had seen the youthful stranger, after the forcible and explicit terms in which he had forbidden Dame Perrine to allow good-looking young men to approach her, he did not even speak to her on the subject.

As his duties required him to return to the Grand-Châtelet, he departed, ordering Raimbault, on pain of instant dismissal, to admit no person to the Grand or Petit-Nesle, whoever he might be, or in whosoever name he might come, especially the miserable adventurer who had been admitted previously.

So it was that, when Ascanio presented himself on the following day with his wares, in accordance with Dame Perrine's suggestion, Raimbault simply opened a small window, and informed him through the bars that the Hôtel de Nesle was closed to everybody, particularly to him.

Ascanio, as may be imagined, withdrew in despair; but we hasten to say that he did not for a moment attribute this extraordinary reception to Colombe; the maiden had bestowed but one glance upon him, had uttered but one sentence, but that glance was so eloquent of shy affection, and there was such a wealth of loving melody in that one sentence, that it had seemed to Ascanio since

he parted from her as if an angel's voice were singing in his heart.

He fancied therefore, and with good reason, that, as he had been seen by the provost, the provost was the author of that terrible order of which he was the victim.

VIII.

PREPARATIONS FOR ATTACK AND DEFENCE.

ASCANIO had no sooner returned to the studio on the previous day, and made his report to Benvenuto touching that part of his expedition which related to the topography of the Hôtel de Nesle, than the goldsmith, seeing that it met his requirements in every respect, hastened to the bureau of Seigneur de Neufville, the first secretary of the king's treasury, to obtain from him documentary evidence of the royal gift. Seigneur de Neufville demanded until the following day to assure himself of the validity of Master Benvenuto's claims, and, although the latter considered him extremely impertinent to refuse to take his word for it, he realized the reasonableness of the demand, and assented, resolved however not to allow Messire de Neufville a half-hour's grace on the following day.

He was punctual to the minute, and was at once admitted to the secretary's presence, which he considered a favorable augury.

"Well, Monseigneur," he said, "is the Italian a liar, or did he tell you the truth?"

"The whole truth, my dear friend."

"That is very fortunate."

"And the king has ordered me to hand you a deed of gift in proper form."

"It will be welcome."

"And yet —" continued the secretary, hesitatingly.

"Well, what more is there? Let us hear."

"And yet if you would allow me to offer you some good advice —"

"Good advice! the devil! that's a rare article, Monsieur le Secrétaire; say on, say on."

"I should advise you to seek another location for your studio than the Grand-Nesle."

"Indeed!" retorted Benvenuto dryly; "think you that it is not a convenient location?"

"It is, indeed; and truth compels me to state that you would have great difficulty in finding a better."

"Very well, what is the matter then?"

"That it belongs to a personage of too much importance for you to come in collision with him without danger."

"I myself belong to the noble King of France," rejoined Cellini, "and I shall never flinch so long as I act in his name."

"Very good, but in our country, Master Benvenuto, every nobleman is king in his own house, and in seeking to eject the provost from the house which he occupies you risk your life."

"We must all die sooner or later," was Cellini's sententious reply.

"You are determined, then —"

"To kill the devil before the devil kills me. Trust me for that, Monsieur le Secrétaire. Let the provost look well to himself, as all those must do who assume to oppose the king's wishes, especially when Master Benvenuto Cellini has it in charge to carry them out."

Thereupon Messire Nicolas de Neufville made an end of his philanthropic observations, but alleged all sorts of formalities to be complied with before delivering the deed. But Benvenuto tranquilly seated himself, declar-

ing that he would not stir until the document was placed in his hands, and that he was determined to stay the night there, if necessary, having foreseen that possibility, and taken the precaution to say to his people that he might not return.

Taking note of this determination, Messire Nicolas de Neufville, regardless of consequences, delivered the deed of gift to Benvenuto Cellini, taking pains, however, to advise Messire Robert d'Estourville of what he had been compelled to do, in part by the king's will, in part by the goldsmith's persistence.

Benvenuto returned to his domicile without saying anything to anybody of what he had done, locked up the deed in the drawer in which he kept his precious stones, and calmly resumed his work.

The information transmitted to the provost by the secretary convinced Messire Robert that Benvenuto, as the Vicomte de Marmagne had said that he would do, persisted in his purpose to take possession of the Hôtel de Nesle, peaceably or by force. The provost, therefore, prepared to maintain his rights, sent for his twenty-four sergeants-at-arms, posted sentinels upon the walls, and went to the Châtelet only when the duties of his office absolutely compelled him to do so.

Days passed, however, and Cellini, tranquilly occupied with the work he had in hand, made not the least demonstration. But the provost felt certain that this apparent tranquillity was only a ruse, and that his foe proposed to wait until he had grown weary of watching, and then take him unawares. And so Messire Robert, with eyes and ears always on the alert, his mind always in a state of extreme tension, and engrossed with warlike thoughts, was finally reduced by this condition of affairs, which was neither peace nor war, to a state of feverish

expectation and anxiety, which threatened, if it were prolonged, to make him as mad as the governor of the Castle of San Angelo. He could not eat or sleep, and grew perceptibly thinner.

From time to time he would abruptly draw his sword and begin to make passes at a wall, shouting : —

“ Let him come on ! let him come on, the villain ! Let him come on, I am ready for him ! ”

But Benvenuto did not come on.

D'Estourville had his calmer moments, too, during which he would succeed in persuading himself that the goldsmith's tongue was longer than his sword, and that he would never dare to carry out his damnable schemes. It was at one of these moments that Colombe, happening to come out of her room, observed all the warlike preparations, and asked her father what was the occasion of them.

“ A scoundrel to be chastised, that's all,” the provost replied.

As it was the provost's business to chastise, Colombe did not even ask who the scoundrel was whose chastisement was preparing, being too deeply preoccupied with her own thoughts not to be content with this brief explanation.

In very truth, Messire Robert with a single word had made a fearful change in his daughter's life ; that life, hitherto so calm, so simple, so obscure and secluded, that life of peaceful days and tranquil nights, was like a lake whose surface is suddenly ruffled by a tempest. She had felt at times before that her soul was sleeping, that her heart was empty, but she thought that her solitude was the cause of her melancholy, and attributed the emptiness of her heart to the fact that she had lost her mother in her infancy. And now, without warning, her

existence, her thoughts, her heart and her soul were filled to overflowing, but with grief.

Ah ! how she then sighed for the days of ignorance and tranquillity, when the commonplace but watchful friendship of Dame Perrine was almost sufficient for her happiness ; the days of hope and faith, when she reckoned upon the future as one reckons upon a friend ; the days of filial trust and confidence, when she believed in the affection of her father. Alas ! her future now was the hateful love of Comte d'Orbec ; her father's affection was simply ambition so disguised. Why, instead of being the only inheritor of a noble name and vast fortune, was she not the child of some obscure bourgeois of the city, who would have cared for and cherished her ? In that case she might have fallen in with this young artist, in whose speech there was so much to move and fascinate, this handsome Ascanio, who seemed to have such a wealth of happiness and love to bestow.

But when the rapid beating of her heart and her flushed cheeks warned her that the stranger's image had filled her thoughts too long, she condemned herself to the task of banishing the lovely dream, and succeeded in placing before her eyes the desolating reality. Since her father had made known to her his matrimonial plans, she had expressly forbidden Dame Perrine to receive Ascanio, upon one pretext or another, threatening to tell her father everything if she disobeyed ; and as the governess, fearing to be accused of complicity with him, had said nothing of the hostile projects of Ascanio's master, poor Colombe believed herself to be well protected in that direction.

It must not be supposed, however, that the sweet-natured child was resigned to the idea of obeying her father's commands. No ; her whole being revolted at

the thought of an alliance with this man, whom she would have hated had she really known what hate was. Beneath her beautiful, pale brow she revolved a thousand thoughts, hitherto unknown to her mind, — thoughts of revolt and rebellion, which she looked upon almost as crimes, and for which she asked God's forgiveness upon her knees. Then it occurred to her to go and throw herself at the king's feet. But she had heard it whispered that the same idea had occurred to Diane de Poitiers under much more terrible circumstances, and that she left her honor there. Madame d'Etampes might protect her too, if she chose. But would she choose? Would she not greet the complaints of a mere child with a contemptuous smile? Such a smile of mockery and contempt she had seen upon her father's lips when she begged him to keep her with him, and it made a terrible impression upon her.

Thus Colombe had no refuge but God: and she knelt before her *prie-Dieu* a hundred times a day, imploring the Omnipotent to send succor to her weakness before the end of the three months which still separated her from her formidable *fiancé*, or, if she could hope for no relief on earth, to allow her at least to join her mother in heaven.

Ascanio's existence, meanwhile, was no less troublous and unhappy than that of his beloved. Twenty times since Raimbault had made known to him the order which forbade his admission to the Hôtel de Nesle had he loitered dreaming about the lofty walls which separated him from his life, — in the morning before anybody had risen, and at night after everybody was asleep. But not once, either openly or furtively, did he try to make his way into the forbidden garden. He still had that virginal respect of early youth, which protects the woman

whom one loves against the very passion which she may have to fear at a later period.

But this did not prevent Ascanio, as he worked away at his carving and chasing, from indulging in many an extravagant dream, to say nothing of those he dreamed in his morning and evening promenades, or during his troubled sleep at night. These dreams were concerned more especially with the day, at first so much dreaded, now so eagerly desired by him, when Benvenuto should assume possession of the Hôtel de Nesle; for Ascanio knew his master, and that all this apparent tranquillity was that of a volcano breeding an eruption. Cellini had given out that the eruption would take place on the following Sunday. Ascanio had no doubt, therefore, that on the following Sunday Cellini's undertaking would be accomplished.

But so far as he was able to judge in his walks around the Séjour de Nesle, the undertaking would not be accomplished without some difficulty, thanks to the guard which was constantly maintained upon the walls; and Ascanio had observed about the hotel all the indications of a fortified post. If there should be an attack, there would be a defence; and as the fortress seemed little disposed to capitulate, it was clear that it must be taken by assault. It was at that decisive moment that Ascanio's chivalrous nature might expect to find an opportunity to display itself. There would be a battle, there would be a breach in the walls to carry, and perhaps there would be a conflagration. Ah! something of that sort was what he longed for! a conflagration most of all, — a conflagration whereby Colombe's life would be endangered! Then he would dart up the tottering staircases, among the burning rafters, and over the crumbling walls. He would hear her voice calling for help; he

would seek her out, take her in his arms, dying and almost unconscious, and bear her away to safety through the roaring sea of flame, her heart against his, and inhaling her breath. Then, having brought her safely through a thousand dangers, he would lay her at the feet of her despairing father, who would reward his gallant conduct by giving her to the man who had saved her life. Or else, as he bore her in his arms over a frail plank thrown across the flaming chasm, his foot would slip, and they would fall together and die in each other's arms, their hearts blending in one last sigh, in a first and last kiss. This latter alternative was not to be despised by one who had so little hope in his heart as Ascanio ; for next to the felicity of living for each other, the greatest happiness is to die together.

Thus it will be seen that all our friends were passing through some very agitated days and nights, with the exception of Benvenuto Cellini, who seemed entirely to have forgotten his hostile designs upon the Hôtel de Nesle, and of Scozzone, who knew nothing of them.

The whole week passed away thus, and Benvenuto Cellini, having worked conscientiously throughout the six days that composed it, and having almost completed the clay model of his Jupiter, donned his coat of mail on the Saturday about five o'clock, buttoned his doublet over it, and, bidding Ascanio accompany him, bent his steps toward the Hôtel de Nesle. When they reached the spot, Cellini made the circuit of the walls, spying out the weak spots, and meditating his plan of siege.

The attack offered more than one difficulty, as the provost had said to his friend Marmagne, as Ascanio had informed his master, and as Benvenuto was now able to see for himself. The Château de Nesle was crenellated and machicolated, was defended by a double wall on the

river side, and furthermore by the city moats and ramparts on the side of the Pré-aux-Clercs. It was one of those massive and imposing feudal structures, which were equal to the task of defending themselves by their mass alone, provided that the doors were securely fastened, and of repelling without outside assistance the assaults of *tirelaines* and *larroneurs*, as they were called in those days, or of the king's men, if need were. This was often the case at that interesting epoch, when one was generally compelled to do police duty for himself.

Having made his reconnoissance according to all the ancient and modern rules of strategy, and deeming it to be his duty to summon the place to surrender before laying siege to it, he knocked at the little door by which Ascanio had once entered. For him as for Ascanio the small window opened; but it was the martial countenance of an archer, instead of that of the pacific gardener, which appeared in the opening.

"What do you want?" the archer demanded of the stranger who dared to knock at the door of the Hôtel de Nesle.

"To take possession of the hotel, which has been given to me, Benvenuto Cellini," replied the goldsmith.

"Very good, — wait," rejoined the fellow, and he went at once to notify Messire d'Estourville, as he had been ordered to do.

A moment later he returned, accompanied by the provost, who did not show himself, but stood listening, with bated breath, in a corner, surrounded by part of his garrison, in order to judge the better of the gravity of the affair.

"We do not know what you mean," said the archer.

"If that be so," said Cellini, "hand this document to Messire le Prévôt; it is a certified copy of the deed

of gift." And he passed the parchment through the window.

The sergeant disappeared a second time ; but as he had simply to put out his hand to hand the copy to the provost, the window opened again almost immediately.

"Here is his answer," said the sergeant, passing through the bars the parchment torn in pieces.

* "Very good," rejoined Cellini with perfect tranquillity. "*Au revoir.*"

He returned to his studio, highly gratified by the attention with which Ascanio had followed his scrutiny of the place, and the young man's judicious suggestions as to the *coup de main* they were to attempt at some time ; and he assured his pupil that he would have made a distinguished general, were it not that he was destined to become a still more distinguished artist, which, in Cellini's view, was infinitely preferable.

The next morning the sun rose in all his glory ; Benvenuto had requested his workmen to come to the studio, although it was Sunday, and not one of them failed to appear.

"My children," said the master, "it is undoubtedly true that I engaged you to work at the goldsmith's trade, and not to fight. But during the two months that we have been together we have learned to know one another so well that, in a serious emergency, I feel that I can count upon you, as you all and always can count upon me. You know what I have in contemplation : we are but poorly accommodated here, with but little air and little space, and our elbows are too cramped to allow us to undertake great works, or even to use the forge with any degree of vigor. The king, in the presence of you all, deigned to bestow upon me a larger and more commodious abode ; but, as he has no leisure to bestow upon

trifling details, he left it to me to install myself therein. Now, the present possessor does not choose to give over to me this property which his Majesty has so generously presented to me ; therefore we must take it. The Provost of Paris, who retains possession in the face of his Majesty's order, (it would seem that such things are of common occurrence in this land,) does not know the man with whom he has to do ; as soon as I am refused, I demand ; as soon as I am resisted, I take by force. Are you disposed to assist me ? I do not conceal from you that there will be danger in so doing : there is a battle to be fought, there are walls to be scaled, and other harmless amusements to be indulged in. There is nothing to fear from the police or the patrol, because we act by his Majesty's authority ; but it may mean death, my children. Therefore, let those who wish to go elsewhere do so without hesitation, let those who wish to remain here not be ashamed to say as much ; I ask for none but bold and resolute hearts. If you leave me to go alone with Pagolo and Ascanio, have no fear on our behalf. I know not how I shall go to work ; but I do know this, that I will not be disappointed for that. But, by the blood of Christ ! if you lend me your hearts and your arms, as I hope you will, woe to the provost and the provostry. Now that you are fully instructed in the matter, speak : will you follow me ?”

They all shouted with one voice : —

“ Anywhere, master ; wherever you choose to lead us !”

“ Bravo, my children ! Then you are all in for the sport ?”

“ All ! ”

“ Then let the tempest howl !” cried Benvenuto ; “ at last we are to have a little diversion. I have been rusty long enough. Up, up, brave hearts and swords ! Ah !

thank God ! we are soon to give and receive a few lusty blows ! Look you, my dear boys, look you, my gallant friends, we must arm ourselves, we must agree upon a plan ; let them be ready to look to themselves, and *vive la joie !* I will give you all that I possess in the way of weapons, offensive and defensive, in addition to those that are hanging on the wall, where every one can choose at will. Ah ! what we really need is a good culverin : but there's its value in arquebuses, hackbuts, pikes, swords, and daggers ; and there are coats of mail galore, and cuirasses and helmets. Come, haste, haste, and let us dress for the ball ! the provost shall pay for the music !”

“ Hurrah ! ” cried all his companions.

Thereupon the studio was the scene of a commotion, a tumult, wonderful to look upon ; the verve and enthusiasm of the master infected every heart and every face. They tried on cuirasses, brandished swords, tested the point of daggers, laughed and sang, as if a masquerade or festival of some sort were in progress. Benvenuto ran hither and thither, handing a boot to this one, buckling the belt of another, and feeling the blood course hotly and freely through his veins, as if this were the life he truly loved.

The workmen meanwhile indulged in jokes at one another's expense, commenting freely upon the bellicose demeanor and awkward attitudes of their fellows.

“ Look, master ! ” cried one of them ; “ look at Simon-le-Gaucher,¹ putting his sword on the same side as we ! On the right, man ! on the right ! ”

“ See Jehan,” retorted Simon, “ holding his halberd as he'll hold his cross when he's a bishop ! ”

“ There's Pagolo putting on a double coat of mail ! ” said Jehan.

¹ Left-handed.

"Why not?" replied Pagolo. "Hermann the German is arraying himself like a knight in the days of the Emperor Barbarossa!"

In fact, the youth referred to by the appellation of Hermann the German (a somewhat pleonastic title, as his name alone was so distinctively Germanic in sound as to indicate that its owner belonged to some one of the circles of the Holy Empire), — Hermann, we say, had covered himself from head to foot with iron, and resembled one of the gigantic statues which the sculptors of that artistic age were accustomed to carve upon tombs.

Benvenuto, although the physical strength of this redoubtable comrade from beyond the Rhine had become proverbial in the studio, remarked that he would be likely to experience some difficulty in moving, being so completely encased, and that his usefulness would certainly be lessened rather than increased. Hermann's only reply was to leap upon a table as lightly as if he were clad in velvet, take down an enormous hammer, wave it around his head, and strike the anvil three such terrific blows that each of them drove it an inch into the ground. There was nothing to say to such a reply; so Benvenuto waved his hand and nodded his head respectfully in token of satisfaction.

Ascanio alone made his toilet apart from the others. He could not avoid a feeling of uneasiness as to the results of the enterprise upon which they were about to embark; for it might well be that Colombe would not forgive him for attacking her father, especially if the struggle should lead to some grave catastrophe, and he would find himself farther removed from her heart, although nearer to her eyes.

Scozzone, half joyous, half anxious, wept one moment and laughed the next. The change of location and the

prospect of a battle were by no means unpleasing to her, but as for blows and wounds, that was another matter; the preparations for the combat made the frolicsome creature dance for joy, but its possible results made the woman that was in her tremble.

Benvenuto at last noticed her, smiling and weeping at the same time, and he went to her side.

"Thou wilt remain here, Scozzone, with Ruperta," he said, "and prepare lint for the wounded, and a good dinner for those who come safely through it."

"Oh no, no!" cried Scozzone; "oh pray let me go with you! With you I have courage enough to defy the provost and all his myrmidons, but alone here with Ruperta I should die of anxiety and fear."

"Oh, I could never consent to that," replied Benvenuto; "it would trouble me too much to think that some mishap might befall thee. Thou wilt pray for us, dear child, while awaiting our return."

"Listen, Benvenuto," rejoined the maiden, as if struck by a sudden thought, "you understand, of course, that I cannot endure the thought of remaining quiet here while you are fighting yonder, wounded, perhaps dying. But there is a way of satisfying both of us; instead of praying for your safety here in the studio, I will go and pray in the church nearest to the spot. In that way I shall be out of danger, and shall know the result immediately, whether it be a victory or a defeat."

"Very well, so be it," replied Benvenuto; "it is understood, of course, that we shall not go forth to kill others, or to be killed ourselves, without first fulfilling the pious duty of listening to mass. We will go together to the church of the Grands Augustins, which is nearer than any other to the Hôtel de Nesle, and will leave thee there, little one."

These arrangements determined upon, and the preparations for the affray at an end, they drank a glass of Burgundy to the success of their enterprise. To their weapons, offensive and defensive, they added hammers, tongs, ladders, and ropes, and left the studio, not after the manner of an army corps, but two by two, at sufficiently long intervals not to attract attention. It was not that a *coup de main* was a more unfrequent occurrence in those days than an *émeute* or a change of ministry in these days of ours ; but, truth to say, it was not customary to select the Sabbath day, or the hour of noon, for this sort of diversion, and it required all Benvenuto's audacity, reinforced by his consciousness that right was on his side, to venture upon such an undertaking.

One after another our heroes arrived at the Grands Augustins, and, having given their weapons and tools into the charge of the sacristan, who was a friend of Simon-le-Gaucher, they entered the church to listen devoutly to the blessed sacrifice of the mass, and to implore God's help in exterminating as many archers as possible.

Truth compels us to state, however, that despite the gravity of the impending crisis, despite his exemplary piety, and despite the importance of the matters to which his prayers had reference, Benvenuto had no sooner entered the church than his actions indicated that his mind was upon something very different. His distraction was due to the fact that just behind him, but on the other side of the nave, sat a young girl reading from an illuminated missal, — a young girl so adorably lovely that she might well have confused the thoughts of a saint, much more of a sculptor. Under such circumstances the artist sadly interfered with the devotions of the Christian. The gallant Cellini could not resist the desire to have some one to join him in his admiration, and as

Catherine, who was at his left, would certainly have frowned upon his inattention, he turned to Ascanio, who was at his right, with the purpose of bidding him turn his eyes toward the lovely picture.

But Ascanio's eyes needed no bidding in that direction ; from the moment that he entered the church his gaze was riveted upon the maiden, and his eyes never left her face.

Benvenuto, seeing that he was absorbed in contemplation of the same object, simply nudged him with his elbow.

"Yes," said Ascanio ; "yes, it is Colombe. O master, is she not beautiful?"

It was indeed Colombe ; her father, not anticipating an attack at high noon, had given her permission, not without some reluctance, to go to the Augustins to pray. Colombe, it is true, was very earnest in her request, for it was the only consolation that remained to her. Dame Perrine was by her side.

"Ah ça ! who is Colombe?" was Benvenuto's very natural query.

"Ah ! yes, you do not know her. Colombe is the daughter of the provost, Messire d'Estourville himself. Is she not beautiful?" he said again.

"No," rejoined Benvenuto, "no, it's not Colombe. 'Tis Hebe, Ascanio, the goddess of youth ; the Hebe whom my great King François has ordered at my hands ; the Hebe of whom I have dreamed, for whom I have prayed to God, and who has come down from above in response to my prayer."

Regardless of the incongruity of the idea of Hebe reading her missal, and pouring out her heart in prayer, Benvenuto continued his hymn to beauty simultaneously with his devotion and his military plans : the goldsmith,

the Catholic, and the strategist predominated in his mind by turns.

“Our Father who art in heaven — Look, Ascanio, what clean-cut, expressive features! — Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven — How fascinatingly graceful the undulating outline of her figure! — Give us this day our daily bread — And thou sayest that such a lovely child is the daughter of that rascally provost whom I propose to exterminate with my own hand? — And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us — Even though I have to burn down the Hôtel to do it — Amen!”

And Benvenuto crossed himself, having no doubt that he had just concluded a most expressive rendering of the Lord's prayer.

The mass came to an end while he was still absorbed in these heterogeneous ideas, which might seem somewhat profane in the case of a man of different temperament at a different epoch, but which were altogether natural in so reckless a nature as Cellini's, at a time when Clement Marot was putting the seven penitential psalms into gallant verse.

As soon as the *Ite, missa est*, was pronounced, Benvenuto and Catherine exchanged a warm grasp of the hand. Then, while the girl, wiping away a tear, remained on the spot where she was to await the result of the combat, Cellini and Ascanio, their eyes still fixed upon Colombe, who had not once looked up from her book, went with their companions to take a drop of holy water; after which they separated, to meet in a deserted *cul-de-sac* about half-way from the church to the Hôtel de Nesle.

Catherine, in accordance with the prearranged plan, remained to the celebration of high mass, as did Colombe

and Dame Perrine, who had simply arrived a little early, and had listened to the first service only as a preparation for the more solemn ceremony to follow ; nor had they any reason to suspect that Benvenuto and his apprentices were upon the point of cutting all the lines of communication with the house they had so imprudently quitted.

IX.

THRUST AND PARRY.

THE decisive moment had arrived. Benvenuto divided his men into two detachments: one was to attempt, by every possible means, to force the door of the Hôtel; the other was to cover the operations of the first, and to keep from the walls, with arquebus shots or with their swords, any of the besieged who might appear upon the battlements, or who might attempt a sortie. Benvenuto took command of this last detachment in person, and selected our friend Ascanio for his lieutenant. At the head of the other he placed Hermann, the good-humored, gallant German, who could flatten an iron bar with a hammer, and a man with his fist. He chose for his second in command little Jehan, a rascal of fifteen years, as active as a squirrel, mischievous as a monkey, and impudent as a page, for whom the Goliath had conceived a very deep affection, for the reason, doubtless, that the playful youngster was forever tormenting him. Little Jehan proudly took his place beside his captain, to the great chagrin of Pagolo, who in his double cuirass was not unlike the statue of the Commandeur in the rigidity of his movements.

Having thus made his dispositions, and reviewed his men and inspected their weapons for the last time, Benvenuto addressed a few words to the brave fellows who were about to face danger, perhaps death, in his cause.

with such good will. Then he grasped each man's hand, crossed himself devoutly, and cried, "Forward!"

The two parties at once took up their line of march, and, skirting the Quai des Augustins, which was deserted at that hour in that spot, they very soon arrived at the Hôtel de Nesle.

Thereupon Benvenuto, unwilling to attack his enemy without first going through all the formalities prescribed by custom in such cases, went forward alone, waving a white handkerchief at the end of his sword, to the same small door as before, and knocked. As before, he was questioned through the barred opening as to the object of his visit. Benvenuto repeated the same formula, saying that he had come to take possession of the château given him by the king. But he was less fortunate than on the former occasion, in that he was not honored with any reply at all.

Thereupon, facing the door, he exclaimed, in loud, distinct tones:—

"To thee, Robert d'Estourville, Provost of Paris, do I, Benvenuto Cellini, goldsmith, sculptor, painter, and engineer, make known that his Majesty François I. has in his good pleasure, as it was his right to do, given to me absolutely the Grand-Nesle. As thou dost insolently maintain thy hold upon it, and, in contravention of the royal will, dost refuse to deliver it to me, I hereby declare to thee, Robert d'Estourville, Seigneur de Villebon, Provost of Paris, that I have come to take possession of the Grand-Nesle by force. Defend thyself therefore, and, if evil comes of thy refusal, know that thou wilt be held answerable therefor on earth and in heaven, before man and before God."

With that Benvenuto paused, and waited; but not a sound came from behind the walls. He thereupon

loaded his arquebus, and ordered his men to make ready their weapons ; then, assembling the leaders Hermann, Ascanio, and Jehan in council, he said to them : —

“ You see, my children, that it is not possible to avoid the conflict. Now it is for us to decide in what way we shall begin the attack.”

“ I will break in the door,” said Hermann, “ and do you follow me in ; that’s all.”

“ With what will you do it, my Samson ? ” queried Cellini.

Hermann looked about and saw on the quay a piece of timber which four ordinary men would have found it difficult to lift.

“ With that beam,” he said.

He walked to where it lay, coolly picked it up, placed it under his arm, and fixed it there like a ram in its socket, then returned to his general.

Meanwhile a crowd was beginning to collect, and Benvenuto, excited thereby, was on the point of giving orders for the attack to begin, when the captain of the king’s archers, notified doubtless by some conservative citizen, appeared at the corner of the street, accompanied by five or six mounted men. This captain was a friend of the provost, and although he knew perfectly well what was toward, he rode up to Benvenuto, hoping to intimidate him doubtless, and while his people checked Hermann’s advance, he said : —

“ What is your desire, and why do you thus disturb the peace of the city ? ”

“ The man who really disturbs the peace,” replied Cellini, “ is he who refuses to obey the king’s orders, not he who executes them.”

“ What do you mean ? ” inquired the captain.

“ I mean that I hold a deed in due form, delivered to

me by Messire de Neufville, secretary of the royal treasury, wherein his Majesty grants to me the Hôtel du Grand-Nesle. But the people who are in possession refuse to recognize this deed, and thereby keep me from my own. Now in one way or another, I have got it into my head that, since Scripture says that we must render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, Benvenuto Cellini is entitled to take what belongs to Benvenuto Cellini."

"Yes! and instead of preventing us from taking possession of our property, you ought to lend us a hand," cried Pagolo.

"Be silent, rascal," said Benvenuto, stamping angrily; "I have no need of anybody's assistance. Dost thou understand?"

"You are right in theory, but wrong in practice," rejoined the captain.

"How may that be?" demanded Benvenuto, who felt that the blood was beginning to rise in his cheeks.

"You are right to wish to enter into possession of your property, but you are wrong to undertake to do it in this way; for you will not gain much, I promise you, fighting walls with your swords. If I were to give you a little friendly advice, it would be to apply to the officers of justice, and carry your grievance to the Provost of Paris, for example. With that, adieu, and good luck to you!"

And the captain of the king's archers rode away with a sneering laugh, whereupon the crowd laughed too.

"He laughs best who laughs last," said Benvenuto Cellini. "Forward, Hermann, forward!"

Hermann took up his joist once more, and while Cellini, Ascanio, and two or three of the most skilful marksmen of the party, arquebus in hand, stood in readiness to fire upon the wall, he rushed forward like a

living catapult against the small door, which they deemed to be easier to burst in than the large one.

But when he approached the wall a shower of stones began to rain down upon him, although no defenders could be seen ; for the provost had ordered stones to be piled on top of the wall, and it was necessary only to push lightly against the piles to send them down upon the heads of the besiegers.

The latter, being thus warmly received, recoiled a step or two, but, although taken entirely by surprise by this alarming method of defence, no one was wounded save Pagolo ; he was so overburdened with his double cuirass that he could not fall back so quickly as the others, and was wounded in the heel.

Hermann himself was no more disturbed by this shower of pebbles than an oak tree by a hail-storm, and kept on to the door, where he at once set to work and began to deal such blows against it that it soon became evident that, stout as it was, it could not long withstand such treatment.

Benvenuto and his men meanwhile stood ready with their arquebuses to fire upon anybody who might appear upon the wall, but no one appeared. The Grand-Nesle seemed to be defended by an invisible garrison, and Benvenuto raged inwardly at his inability to do anything to assist the dauntless German. Suddenly he happened to glance at the old Tour de Nesle, which stood by itself, as we have said, on the other side of the quay, and bathed its feet in the Seine.

"Wait, Hermann," cried Cellini, "wait, my good fellow ; the Hôtel de Nesle is ours as surely as my name is Benvenuto Cellini, and I am a goldsmith by trade."

Motioning to Ascanio and his two companions to follow him, he ran to the tower, while Hermann, in obedi-

ence to his orders, stepped back out of range of the stones, and awaited the fulfilment of the general's promise, leaning upon his timber as a Swiss would lean upon his halberd.

As Benvenuto anticipated, the provost had neglected to station a guard in the old tower, so that he took possession of it unopposed, and, running up the stairs, four at a leap, reached the summit in a moment; the terrace overlooked the walls of the Grand-Nesle, as a steeple overlooks a town, so that the besieged, who a moment before were sheltered by their ramparts, suddenly found themselves entirely unprotected.

The report of an arquebus and the hissing of a bullet, followed by the fall of an archer, warned the provost that the face of affairs was in all probability about to change.

At the same moment Hermann, realizing that he would now have a free field, resumed his joist, and began to batter away again at the door, which the besieged had strengthened somewhat during the momentary suspension of hostilities.

The crowd, with the marvellous instinct of self-possession always noticeable in such bodies, realized that shooting was to form part of the entertainment, and that spectators of the tragedy about to be enacted were likely to be splashed with blood; and they no sooner heard the report of Benvenuto's arquebus and the cry of the wounded archer than they dispersed like a flock of pigeons.

A single individual remained.

This was no other than our friend, Jacques Aubry, the student, who had kept the appointment made the preceding Sunday with Ascanio, in the hope of enjoying his game of tennis.

He had but to cast a glance over the battle-field to understand what was going on.

It is not difficult to divine the determination arrived at by Jacques Aubry, from what we have already seen of his character. To play at tennis or with fire-arms was equally sport to him ; and as he guessed that the besiegers were most likely to be his friends, he enlisted under their banner.

"Well, my boys," he said, walking up to the group which was waiting for the door to be burst in to rush into the citadel, "we are having a bit of a siege, are we? Peste! you're not attacking a cabin, and it's a good deal of an undertaking for so few of you to try to take a strong place like this."

"We are not alone," said Pagolo, who was dressing his heel ; and he pointed to Benvenuto and his three or four companions, who were keeping up such a well sustained fire upon the wall that the stones were falling much less freely than at first.

"I see, I see, Master Achilles," said Jacques Aubry, "for you are like him in being wounded in the heel, in addition to a thousand other points of similarity, no doubt. I see : yes, there's my friend Ascanio, and the master doubtless, on top of the tower yonder."

"Very true," said Pagolo.

"And that fellow banging away at the door so lustily is one of you also, is n't he?"

"That's Hermann," said little Jehan proudly.

"Peste! how he goes on!" said the student. "I must go and congratulate him."

He sauntered along with his hands in his pockets, regardless of the bullets whistling above his head, to the brave German, who kept at his task with the regularity of a machine.

"Do you need anything, my dear Goliath?" said Jacques Aubry. "I am at your service."

"I am thirsty," replied Hermann, without pausing in his work.

"Peste! I can well believe it; that's thirsty work you're doing there, and I wish I had a cask of beer to offer you."

"Water!" said Hermann, "water!"

"Do you mean that that mild beverage will satisfy you? So be it. The river is at hand, and you shall be served in a moment."

Jacques ran to the river, filled his helmet with water, and took it to the German. He leaned his beam against the wall, swallowed at a draught all that the helmet contained, and handed it back to the student empty.

"Thanks," he said, and, taking up the beam once more, he resumed his work.

An instant later he said, "Go and tell the master to be in readiness, for we are getting on famously here."

Jacques Aubry started for the tower, and in a very few moments he stood between Ascanio and Benvenuto, who were keeping up such a brisk and effective fire that they had already shot down two or three men, and the provost's archers were beginning to think twice before showing themselves upon the walls.

Meanwhile, as Hermann had sent word to Benvenuto, the door was beginning to yield, and the provost resolved to make one last effort; he cheered on his men to such good purpose that the stones began to rain down once more. But two or three arquebus shots speedily calmed anew the ardor of the besieged, who, despite all Messire Robert's promises and remonstrances, coyly remained out of range. Thereupon Messire Robert himself appeared, alone, carrying in his hands an enormous stone, and made ready to hurl it down upon Hermann's head.

But Benvenuto was not the man to allow his retainer

to be taken by surprise. As soon as he caught sight of the provost rashly venturing where no one else ventured to go, he put his weapon to his shoulder; it would have been all up with Messire Robert, had not Ascanio, just as Cellini pulled the trigger, thrown up the barrel with a quick motion of his hand accompanied by a sharp exclamation, so that the bullet whistled harmlessly through the air. Ascanio had recognized Colombe's father.

As Benvenuto turned furiously upon him to demand an explanation, the stone, thrown with all the force the provost could impart to it, fell full upon Hermann's helmet. Even the enormous strength of the modern Titan was not equal to the task of sustaining such a blow; he relaxed his hold of the timber, threw out his arms as if seeking something to cling to, and, finding nothing within reach, fell to the ground unconscious, with a terrible crash.

Besieged and besiegers simultaneously set up a shout. Little Jehan and three or four comrades who were near Hermann ran to him to carry him away from the wall, and look to his injuries; but the large and small doors of the Hôtel de Nesle opened at the same moment, and the provost, at the head of twelve or fifteen men, darted upon the wounded man, cutting and slashing vigorously, as did all his followers, so that Jehan and his comrades were forced to retreat, although Benvenuto was shouting to them to hold their ground, and that he would come and help them. The provost seized the opportunity; eight of his men lifted Hermann, who was still unconscious, by the arms and legs, and seven took up a position to protect their retreat, so that, while Cellini, Ascanio, and their three or four comrades on the terrace of the tower were hurrying down the four or five flights of stairs which lay between them and the street, Her-

mann and his bearers re-entered the Grand-Nesle. When Cellini, arquebus in hand, appeared at the door of the tower, the door of the Hôtel was just closing behind the last of the provost's men-at-arms.

There was no disguising the fact that this was a check, and a serious check at that. Cellini, Ascanio, and their comrades had, it is true, disabled three or four of the besieged, but the loss of these three or four men was much less disastrous to the provost, than was the loss of Hermann to Cellini.

The besiegers were dazed for a moment.

Suddenly Ascanio and Cellini looked at each other, as if by a common impulse.

"I have a plan," said Cellini, looking to the left, that is to say, toward the city.

"And so have I," Ascanio rejoined, looking to the right, that is to say, toward the fields.

"I have devised a plan to bring the garrison out of the castle."

"And I a plan to open the door for you, if you do bring them out."

"How many men do you need?"

"A single one will suffice."

"Choose."

"Will you come with me, Jacques Aubry?" said Ascanio.

"To the end of the world, my dear fellow, to the end of the world. But I shouldn't be sorry to have some sort of a weapon, the end of a sword for instance, or a suspicion of a dagger — four or five inches of steel to feel my way with if occasion requires."

"Oh, take Pagolo's sword," said Ascanio; "he can't use it, for he's nursing his heel with his right hand and crossing himself with the other."

"And here's my own dagger to complete your outfit," said Cellini. "Strike with it all you please, young man, but do not leave it in the wound; it would be altogether too handsome a present to the wounded man, for the hilt was carved by myself, and is worth a hundred golden crowns, if it is worth a sou."

"And the blade?" queried Jacques Aubry. "The hilt is very valuable, no doubt, but at such a time the blade is of the greatest importance to my mind."

"The blade is priceless," rejoined Benvenuto; "with it I killed my brother's murderer."

"Bravo!" cried the student. "Come, Ascanio, let's be off."

"I am ready," said Ascanio, winding five or six lengths of rope around his body, and putting one of the ladders over his shoulder, — "I am ready."

The two venturesome youths walked along the quay a hundred yards or thereabouts, then turned to the left, and disappeared around the corner of the wall of the Grand-Nesle, behind the city moat.

Let us leave Ascanio to carry out his scheme, and follow Cellini in the development of his.

The objects upon which his eyes rested, when, as we have said, he looked toward the left, that is, in the direction of the city, were two women, standing amid a group of timid spectators at some little distance, — two women, in whom he thought he recognized the provost's daughter and her governess.

They were in fact Colombe and Dame Perrine, who, after hearing mass, set out to return to the Petit-Nesle, and had come to a stand-still in the crowd, trembling with alarm on account of what they had heard of the siege that was in progress, and of what they saw with their own eyes.

But Colombe no sooner perceived that there was a momentary cessation of hostilities, which left the road open for her, than, heedless of the entreaties of Dame Perrine, who begged her not to risk her safety in the tumult, she went forward resolutely, impelled by her anxiety for her father, and leaving Dame Perrine entirely free to follow her or to remain where she was. As the duenna was really deeply attached to her charge, she determined to accompany her, notwithstanding her fright.

They left the group just as Ascanio and Jacques Aubry turned the corner of the wall.

Now Benvenuto Cellini's plan may be divined.

As soon as he saw the two women coming toward him, he himself stepped forward to meet them, and gallantly offered his arm to Colombe.

"Have no fear, madame," he said; "if you will deign to accept my arm I will escort you to your father."

Colombe hesitated, but Dame Perrine seized the arm on her side which Benvenuto had forgotten to offer her.

"Take his arm, my dear, take it," she said, "and let us accept this noble knight's protection. Look, look! there is Monsieur le Prévôt, leaning over the wall: he is anxious about us, no doubt."

Colombe took Benvenuto's arm, and the three walked to within a step or two of the door.

There Cellini stopped, and said to the provost in a loud voice, making sure that Colombe's arm and Dame Perrine's were safely within his own:—

"Monsieur le Prévôt, your daughter who is here desires to enter; I trust that you will open the door to her, unless you prefer to leave so charming a hostage in your enemy's hands."

Twenty times within two hours the provost, behind his ramparts, had thought of his daughter, whom he had so

imprudently allowed to go out, being in considerable doubt as to the possibility of admitting her again. He was hoping that she would be warned in time, and would be wise enough to go to the Grand-Châtelet and await results, when he saw Cellini leave his companions and go to meet two women, in whom he recognized Colombe and Dame Perrine.

"The little fool!" he muttered beneath his breath; "but I can't leave her in the midst of these miscreants."

He opened the wicket, and showed his face behind the grating.

"Well," said he, "what are your terms?"

"These," said Benvenuto. "I will allow Madame Colombe and her governess to enter, but only on condition that you come forth with all your men, and we will then decide our dispute by a fair fight in the open. They who remain in possession of the battle-field shall have the Hôtel de Nesle; '*Væ victis!*' as your compatriot Brennus said."

"I accept," said the provost, "on one condition."

"What is it?"

"That you and your people stand back to give my daughter time to come in and my archers time to go out."

"Agreed," said Cellini; "but do you come out first, and let Madame Colombe go in afterward; when she is safely inside, you will throw the key over the wall to her, and thus leave yourself no opportunity to retreat."

"Agreed," said the provost.

"Your word?"

"On the faith of a gentleman. And yours?"

"On the faith of Benvenuto Cellini."

These terms being agreed upon, the door opened, and the provost's retainers filed out, and drew up in two rows before the door, Messire d'Estourville at their head.

They were nineteen in all. On the other side, Benvenuto, without Ascanio, Hermann, and Jacques Aubry, had but eight men remaining, and of these Simon-le-Gaucher was wounded, —luckily in the right hand. But Benvenuto was not given to counting his foes; it will be remembered that he did not hesitate to attack Pompeo single-handed, although he was attended by a dozen sbirri. He was only too glad, therefore, to abide by his agreement, for he desired nothing so much as a general and decisive action.

“You may go in now, madame,” he said to his fair prisoner.

Colombe flew across the space which lay between the two camps as swiftly as the bird whose name she bore, and threw herself panting into the provost’s arms.

“Father! father!” she cried, weeping, “in Heaven’s name, do not expose yourself!”

“Go inside!” said the provost sharply, taking her by the arm, and leading her to the door; “’tis your folly that reduces us to this extremity.”

Colombe passed through the door, followed by Dame Perrine, to whom fear had lent, if not wings, as to her lovely ward, at least legs, which she thought she had lost ten years before.

The provost closed the door behind them.

“The key! the key!” cried Cellini.

True to his promise, the provost took the key from the lock and threw it over the wall, so that it fell into the courtyard.

“And now,” cried Benvenuto, rushing upon the provost and his troop, “every man for himself, and God for us all!”

A terrible struggle ensued, for before the provost’s people had time to lower their weapons and fire, Ben-

venuto with his seven workmen was in their midst, slashing to right and left with the terrible sword which he handled in such masterly fashion, and which, forged by his own hand, met few coats of mail or breastplates able to resist it. The soldiers thereupon cast aside their useless arquebuses, drew their swords, and began to cut and thrust in return. But, despite their numbers and their gallantry, in less time than it takes to write the words, they were scattered all about the square, and two or three of the bravest, wounded so severely that they could fight no longer, were forced to fall back.

The provost saw the danger, and being a brave man, who in his time had achieved some fame as a fighting man, he rushed forward to confront this redoubtable Benvenuto Cellini, whom nobody seemed able to withstand.

"To me!" he cried; "to me, infamous robber! and let us decide the affair! What say you?"

"Oh! I could ask nothing better," replied Benvenuto. "If you will bid your people not to interfere with us, I am your man."

"Stand where you are!" said the provost to his men.

"Let not one of you stir!" said Cellini to his.

And the combatants on either side stood rooted in their places, silent and motionless, like the Homeric warriors, who ceased their own fighting in order to miss no part of a contest between two renowned chiefs.

Thereupon the provost and Cellini, each of whom already held his naked sword in his hand, attacked each other at the same instant.

The provost was a clever fencer, but Cellini's skill in that direction was of the very first order. For ten or twelve years past the provost had not once had occasion to draw his sword. On the other hand, during those same ten or twelve years hardly a day had passed that

Benvenuto had not had or made an occasion to draw his. At the outset, therefore, the provost, who had counted a little too much upon his own prowess, became conscious of his enemy's superiority.

Cellini, for his part, meeting with a resistance which he hardly anticipated from a man of the robe, exerted all the energy, activity, and cunning of which he was capable. It was a marvellous thing to watch his sword, which, like the triple sting of a serpent, threatened the head and the heart at the same instant, flying from place to place, and hardly giving his adversary time to parry, much less to make a single thrust. And so the provost, realizing that he had to do with one stronger than himself, began to give ground, still defending himself, however. Unluckily for Messire Robert, his back was toward the wall, so that a very few steps brought him up against the door, for which he instinctively aimed, although he was well aware that he had thrown the key over the wall.

When he reached that point he felt that he was lost, and like a wild boar at bay, he summoned all his strength, and delivered three or four lusty blows in such rapid succession that it was Benvenuto's turn to parry: once indeed he was a second too late, and his adversary's blade grazed his breast, despite the excellent coat of mail he wore. But, like a wounded lion bent upon speedy vengeance, Benvenuto, the moment that he felt the sharp point of the sword, gathered himself for a spring, and would have run the provost through with a deadly lunge, had not the door behind him suddenly given way at that moment, so that Messire d'Estourville fell over backwards, and the sword came in contact with the individual who had saved him by opening the door so unexpectedly.

But the result was different from what might have

been expected, for the wounded man said nothing, while Benvenuto gave utterance to a terrible cry. He had recognized Ascanio in the man whom he had unintentionally wounded. He had no eyes for Hermann or for Jacques Aubry, who stood behind his victim. Like a madman, he threw his arms around the young man's neck, seeking the wound with his eyes and his hand and his mouth, and crying: —

“Slain, slain, slain by my hand! Ascanio, my child, I have killed thee!” and roaring and weeping, as lions roar and weep.

Meanwhile Hermann extricated the provost, unharmed, from between Ascanio's and Cellini's legs, and, taking him under his arm as he might have done with a baby, deposited him in a little house where Raimbault kept his gardening tools. He locked the door upon him, drew his sword, and assumed a posture indicative of his purpose to defend his prisoner against any one who might undertake to recapture him.

Jacques Aubry made but one bound from the pavement to the top of the wall, brandishing his dagger triumphantly, and shouting: “Blow, trumpets, blow! the Grand-Nesle is ours!”

How all these surprising things had come to pass the reader will discover in the following chapter.

X.

OF THE ADVANTAGE OF FORTIFIED TOWNS.

THE Hôtel de Nesle, on the side bounded by the Pré-aux-Clercs, was doubly defended by its walls and by the city moat, so that on that side it was considered impregnable. Now Ascanio very sensibly reflected that it is seldom deemed necessary to guard what cannot be taken, and he determined to make an attack upon the point where the besieged had not thought of providing against one.

With that object in view he set out with his friend Jacques Aubry, not dreaming that, as he disappeared in one direction, Colombe would appear in the other, and provide Benvenuto with a means of compelling the provost to adopt a course which he was most reluctant to adopt.

Ascanio's scheme was very difficult of execution, and very dangerous in its possible results. He proposed to cross a deep moat, scale a wall twenty-five feet high, and at the end perhaps fall into the midst of the enemy. Not till he arrived at the brink of the moat and of his enterprise did he realize the difficulty of crossing the one and carrying through the other; and then his determination, firm as it was at the outset, wavered for an instant.

Jacques Aubry halted some ten or twelve paces behind his friend, and stood tranquilly gazing from the wall to the moat. Having measured them both with his eye, he said:—

"I beg you, my dear fellow, to have the kindness to inform me why you bring me hither, unless it be to fish for frogs. Ah! yes, — you glance at your ladder. Very good. I understand. But your ladder is only twelve feet long, while the wall is twenty-five feet high and the moat ten wide, which makes a difference of twenty-three feet, if my reckoning is correct."

Ascanio was taken aback for a moment by this unanswerable arithmetic; but suddenly he cried, striking his forehead with his hand: —

"Ah! I have an idea! Look!"

"Where?"

"There!" said Ascanio; "there!"

"That's not an idea you are pointing at," rejoined the student, "but an oak tree."

There was in truth a huge oak growing near the outer edge of the moat, the upper branches of which gazed inquisitively over the wall of the *Séjour de Nesle*.

"What? don't you understand?" cried Ascanio.

"Yes! yes! I begin to see through it now. Yes, it's the very thing. I see it all. The oak and the wall form part of the arch of a bridge which your ladder will complete: but the abyss yawns beneath, my friend, and an abyss full of mud. The devil! we mustn't forget that. I am wearing my best clothes, and Simone's husband is beginning to grumble about giving me credit."

"Help me to hoist the ladder," said Ascanio; "that's all I ask of you."

"Aha!" said the student, "and I am to stay below! Thanks!"

Each of them seized a branch, and they were soon in the tree. By their united strength they succeeded in pulling the ladder up after them to the top of the tree, where they lowered it like a drawbridge, and found to

their intense satisfaction that while one end rested firmly upon a stout branch, the other end extended two or three feet beyond the wall.

"But when we are upon the wall, what are we to do?" Aubry inquired.

"Why, when we're upon the wall we will pull the ladder after us, and go down by it."

"Very good. There is only one trifling difficulty, and that is that the wall is twenty-five feet high, and the ladder only twelve."

"I have provided for that," said Ascanio, unwinding the rope from his body. He then made one end fast to the trunk of the tree, and threw the other over the wall.

"Ah! great man, I understand you," cried Aubry, "and I am proud and happy to break my neck with you."

"Very well! what do you propose to do?"

"Go across," and Aubry prepared to cross the space that lay between them and the wall.

"No, no!" said Ascanio, "it is my place to go first."

"Which finger is wet?" said Aubry, holding out his hand to his companion with two fingers open and two closed.

"So be it," said Ascanio, touching one of the two closed fingers.

"You have won," said Aubry. "Go on: but keep cool, don't get excited."

"Never fear."

Ascanio started out upon the flying bridge, while Jacques Aubry steadied it by sitting upon the end; the ladder was a frail support, but the daring youth was light. The student, hardly daring to breathe, thought that he wavered for an instant; but he passed quickly over the narrow space that separated him from the wall,

and arrived there safe and sound. He was still in very great danger if any of the besieged should happen to espy him, but his anticipations were verified.

"No one in sight," he shouted to his companion, — "no one!"

"If that is so," said Aubry, "on with the dance!"

And he ventured upon the narrow, trembling path, while Ascanio, putting his whole weight upon the other end of the ladder, repaid the service rendered him. As he was as light and as active as Ascanio, he was at his side in an instant.

Both of them sat astride the wall and drew the ladder across; they then made fast the other end of the rope to it, and lowered it, swinging it out so that the lower end would rest on the ground at a safe distance from the wall; lastly, Ascanio, who had won the privilege of making experiments, took the rope in both hands and slid down until his feet rested upon the topmost round of the ladder; another second and he was on the ground.

Jacques Aubry followed him with similar good fortune, and the two friends found themselves in the garden.

It was plainly advisable for them to act at once. All their manœuvring had taken considerable time, and Ascanio was fearful lest his absence and Aubry's had been prejudicial to the master's interests. Drawing their swords as they ran, they hastened to the door leading into the first courtyard, where the garrison should be, assuming that they had not changed their position. When they reached the door, Ascanio put his eye to the keyhole, and saw that the courtyard was empty.

"Benvenuto has succeeded," he cried; "the garrison has gone out. The hotel is ours!" and he tried to open the door, which proved to be locked.

Both of the young men put forth all their strength in an effort to force it.

"This way! this way!" exclaimed a voice, which found an echo in Ascanio's heart: "this way, Monsieur!"

He turned and saw Colombe at a window on the ground floor. In two bounds he was at her side.

"Aha!" exclaimed Jacques Aubry, following him; "it seems that we have friends in the citadel! Aha! you did n't tell me that, my boy!"

"Oh! save my father, Monsieur Ascanio!" cried Colombe, without any indication of surprise at the young man's appearance, and as if his presence were the most natural thing in the world. "They are fighting outside, do you know, and it's all for me, all on my account! O mon Dieu! mon Dieu! grant that they kill not one another!"

"Have no fear," said Ascanio, darting into the apartment, which had a door leading into the little courtyard; "have no fear, I will answer for everything!"

"Have no fear," said Jacques Aubry, following at his heels; "have no fear, we will answer for everything!"

As he entered the room Ascanio heard his name called a second time, but by a voice much less musical than the other.

"Who calls me?" he said.

"I, my young friend," the same voice replied, with a most pronounced Teutonic accent.

"Pardieu!" cried Aubry, "'t is our Goliath! What the deuce are you doing in that hen-roost?" he added, looking through the window of the gardener's shed, at which he saw a face which he recognized as Hermann's.

"I haf found myself here, but I know not how I haf here come. Draw the bolt, that I may go and fight. Quick, quick, quick! my hand itches."

"There you are!" said the student, rendering Hermann the service he requested.

Meanwhile Ascanio was hurrying toward the door opening on the quay, where he could hear a tremendous clashing of swords. When naught but the thickness of the wood separated him from the combatants, he feared that, if he showed himself at that moment, he might fall into the hands of his enemies, so he first looked out through the grated wicket. There he saw Cellini facing him, eager, excited and thirsting for the blood of his antagonist, and realized that Messire Robert was lost. He picked up the key, which lay on the ground, opened the door quickly, and thinking of nothing save his promise to Colombe, received in his shoulder the blow which, but for him, would inevitably have transfixed the provost.

We have already witnessed the result of that occurrence. Benvenuto, in desperation, threw himself upon Ascanio's neck; Hermann imprisoned the provost in the same cage from which he had just been set free himself; and Jacques Aubry, perched upon the rampart, flapped his wings and crowed lustily in honor of the victory.

The victory was in very truth complete; the provost's people, when their master was made prisoner, did not even try to dispute it, but laid down their arms.

Accordingly the goldsmiths all entered the courtyard of the Grand-Nesle, thenceforth their property, and secured the door behind them, leaving the archers and sergeants outside.

Benvenuto, however, took no part in the latter proceedings; he still held Ascanio in his arms, having removed his coat of mail, torn away his doublet, and finally reached the wound, and was stanching the flow of blood with his handkerchief.

"My Ascanio, my child!" he said again and again; "wounded, wounded by me! what will thy mother in heaven say? Forgive me, Stefana, forgive me! Art thou in pain? tell me. Does my hand hurt thee? Will this accursed blood never stop? A surgeon, quickly! Pray, will not some one call a surgeon?"

Jacques Aubry ran out of the courtyard at the top of his speed.

"It is nothing, dear master, it is nothing," said Ascanio; "a mere scratch on my arm. — Don't feel so terribly, for I assure you it's nothing."

The surgeon, brought to the hotel by Jacques Aubry five minutes later, confirmed Ascanio's assurance that the wound was not dangerous, although quite deep, and at once set about bandaging it.

"Ah! what a weight you lift from my heart!" said Cellini. "Then I am not thy murderer, dear child! But what is the matter, my Ascanio? thy pulse is beating madly, and the blood rushing to thy face! O Monsieur le Chirurgien, we must take him away from here, — the fever is laying hold of him."

"No, no, master," said Ascanio, "on the contrary I feel much better. Leave me here, leave me here, I implore you!"

"My father?" suddenly inquired a voice behind Benvenuto, which made him jump; "what have you done with my father?"

Benvenuto turned and saw Colombe, pale and rigid, seeking the provost with her glance, as she asked for him with her voice.

"Oh! he is safe and sound, Mademoiselle! safe and sound, thanks be to Heaven!" cried Ascanio.

"Thanks be to this poor boy, who received the blow intended for him," said Benvenuto, "for you may truly

say that this gallant fellow saved your life, Monsieur le Prévôt. — How 's this? where are you, Messire Robert?" exclaimed Cellini, looking about for the provost, whose disappearance he could not understand.

"He is here, master," said Hermann.

"Where, pray?"

"Here, in the little prison."

"O Monsieur Benvenuto!" cried Colombe, darting to the shed with a gesture of mingled entreaty and reproach.

"Open, Hermann," said Cellini.

Hermann obeyed, and the provost appeared in the doorway, somewhat humiliated by his misadventure. Colombe threw herself into his arms.

"O father! father!" she cried; "are you not wounded? has no harm befallen you?" and as she spoke she looked at Ascanio.

"No," said the provost in his harsh voice, "no, thank Heaven! nothing has happened to me."

"And — and —" queried Colombe, in a faltering tone, "is it true that this youth —"

"I cannot deny that he arrived at just the right time."

"Yes," interposed Cellini, "yes, at the right time to receive the sword thrust which I intended for you, Monsieur le Prévôt. Yes, Mademoiselle Colombe, yes," he added, "you owe your father's life to this brave fellow, and if Monsieur le Prévôt does n't proclaim it from the housetops, he is an ingrate as well as a liar."

"I trust that his rescuer will not have to pay too dearly for his gallantry," rejoined Colombe, blushing at her own audacity.

"O Mademoiselle!" cried Ascanio, "I would gladly have shed all my blood in such a cause!"

"Well, well, Messire le Prévôt," said Cellini, "see

what tender emotions you have caused to spring up. But Ascanio may not be able to bear the excitement. The bandage is in place, and it would be well for him, I think, to take a little rest now."

What Benvenuto had said to the provost of the service rendered him by the wounded man was no more than the truth; and as every truth has an innate strength of its own, the provost in his heart could but admit that he owed his life to Ascanio. He therefore put a good face on the matter, and approached the wounded man, saying:—

"Young man, an apartment in my hotel is at your service."

"In your hotel, Messire Robert!" exclaimed Cellini, with a laugh, for his good humor returned as his anxiety on Ascanio's account vanished; "in your hotel? Why, do you really wish to begin the battle over again?"

"What!" cried the provost, "do you claim the right to turn my daughter and myself out of doors?"

"By no means, Messire. You now occupy the Petit-Nesle. Very good! keep the Petit-Nesle, and let us live on such terms as good neighbors should. Be good enough, Messire, to make no opposition to Ascanio's being at once made comfortable in the Grand-Nesle, where we will join him this evening. Thereafter, if you prefer war —"

"O father!" cried Colombe.

"No! peace!" said the provost.

"There can be no peace without conditions, Monsieur le Prévôt. Do me the honor to accompany me to the Grand-Nesle, or the favor to receive me at the Petit, and we will draw up our treaty."

"I will go with you, Monsieur," said the provost.

"So be it!"

"Mademoiselle," said D'Estourville then to his daughter, "be good enough to return to your apartments and await my return there."

Colombe, notwithstanding the harsh tone in which this command was uttered, presented her forehead to her father to kiss, and with a courtesy addressed to everybody present, so that Ascanio might come in for a share of it, she withdrew.

Ascanio followed her with his eyes until she disappeared. As there was nothing further to detain him in the courtyard, he asked to be taken inside. Hermann thereupon took him under the arms as if he were a child, and transported him to the Grand-Nesle.

"On my word, Messire Robert," said Benvenuto, who had also looked after the maiden while she was in sight, "on my word! you were very judicious to send my late prisoner away, and I thank you for the precaution,—on my honor I do. I am free to say that Mademoiselle Colombe's presence might have been prejudicial to my interests by making me too weak, and too willing to forget that I am a victor, to remember simply that I am an artist,—that is to say, a lover of every perfect form and of all divine beauty."

Messire d'Estourville acknowledged the compliment by a decidedly ungracious contortion of his features; he followed the goldsmith, however, without outwardly manifesting his ill-humor, but mumbling dire threats beneath his breath. Cellini, to put the finishing touch to his mortification, begged him to go over his new abode with him. The invitation was conveyed in such courteous terms that it was impossible to decline. The provost therefore accompanied his neighbor, who showed him no mercy, and left not a corner of the garden nor a room in the chateau unvisited.

"Ah! this is truly magnificent," said Benvenuto when they had finished the tour of inspection, during which they were actuated by widely opposed emotions. "Now, Monsieur le Prévôt, I can understand and excuse your repugnance to give up this property; but I need not say that you will be most welcome whenever you may choose, as to-day, to do me the honor of calling upon me in my poor abode."

"You forget, Monsieur, that I am here to-day for no other purpose than to listen to your conditions and state my own. I am ready to listen."

"How so, Messire Robert? On the contrary, I am at your service. But if you choose to allow me first to make known my wishes to you, you will then be free to give expression to your own."

"Say on."

"First of all, the one essential clause."

"What is that?"

"It is this:—

"ARTICLE I.—Messire Robert d'Estourville doth concede Benvenuto Cellini's right to the property called the Grand-Nesle, doth freely abandon it to him, and doth renounce all claim thereto forever, for himself and his heirs."

"Accepted," said the provost. "But if it should please the king to take from you what he has now taken from me, and to give to some other what he has now given to you, I am not to be held responsible."

"Ouais!" said Cellini, "there's some mischievous mental reservation hidden in that, Monsieur le Prévôt. But no matter; I shall know how to retain what I have won. Let us pass to the next."

"'T is my turn," said the provost.

"That is no more than fair."

"ARTICLE II. — Benvenuto Cellini agrees to make no attack upon the Petit-Nesle, which is and is to remain the property of Robert d'Estourville; furthermore, he will not even attempt to gain a footing there as a neighbor, and under the guise of friendship."

"Very good," said Benvenuto, "although the clause is by no means conceived in kindness; but if the door is thrown open to me I shall not show myself so devoid of courtesy as to refuse to enter."

"I will give orders to avert that possibility," retorted the provost.

"Let us to the next."

"I continue: —

"ARTICLE III. — The first courtyard, between the Grand and Petit Nesles, shall be common to both estates."

"That is quite right," said Benvenuto, "and you will do me the justice to believe that if Mademoiselle Colombe desires to go out, I shall not keep her a prisoner."

"Oh! never fear: my daughter will go in and out by a door which I undertake to have cut in the wall. I simply wish to make sure of an entrance for carriages and wagons."

"Is that all?"

"Yes," replied Messire Robert. "Apropos," he added, "I trust that you will allow me to remove my furniture."

"That is no more than fair. Your furniture is yours, as the Grand-Nesle is mine. Now, Messire le Prévôt, let us add one more clause to the treaty, — a clause purely benevolent in its purpose."

"State it."

"ARTICLE IV. and last. — Messire Robert d'Estourville and Benvenuto Cellini lay aside all ill-will, and loyally and sincerely agree to abide in peace."

"I accept the article, but only in so far as it does not bind me to bear aid to you against those who may attack you. I agree to do nothing to injure you, but I do not agree to make myself agreeable to you."

"As to that, Monsieur le Prévôt, you know perfectly well that I can defend myself alone, do you not? If there is no objection now on your part," added Cellini, passing the pen to him, "sign, Monsieur le Prévôt, sign."

"I will sign," said the provost, suiting the action to the word, and each of the contracting parties retained a copy of the treaty.

This formality at an end, Messire d'Estourville returned to the Petit-Nesle, being in great haste to scold poor Colombe for her rash expedition. Colombe hung her head, and let him say what he chose, not hearing a single word of his reproaches; for during all the time that they endured the girl was engrossed by a single longing, to ask her father for news of Ascanio. But it was useless: try as hard as she would, she could not force the wounded youth's name beyond her lips.

While these things were taking place on one side of the wall, on the other side, Catherine, who had been sent for from the church, made her entry into the Grand-Nesle; the fascinating madcap threw herself into Benvenuto's arms, pressed Ascanio's hand, complimented Hermann, made sport of Pagolo, laughed, wept, sang, asked questions, all in the same breath. She had suffered terribly, for the reports of fire-arms had reached her ears and interrupted her prayers again and again. But now everything was all right, everybody had come out safe and sound from the battle, save four dead and three wounded men, and Scozzone's high spirits did homage to both victory and victors.

When the uproar caused by Catherine's arrival had

subsided in some measure, Ascanio remembered the motive which brought the student to the spot so opportunely. He turned to Benvenuto and said : —

“ Master, my comrade Jacques Aubry and I were to try our hands at a game of tennis to-day. In good sooth, I am hardly in condition to be his partner, as our friend Hermann says. He has assisted us so gallantly in our undertaking, however, that I venture to beg you to take my place.”

“ With all my heart,” said Benvenuto; “ but you must look to yourself, Master Jacques Aubry.”

“ I will try, I will try, Messire.”

“ We shall sup together afterward, and you know that the victor will be expected to drink two bottles more than his vanquished opponent.”

“ Which means that I shall be carried home dead drunk, Master Benvenuto. *Vive la joie!* this suits me. Ah! the devil! there’s Simone waiting for me, too! Pshaw! I had to wait for her last Sunday. It’s her turn to-day, so much the worse for her.”

With that the two seized balls and rackets, and hied them to the garden.

XI.

OWLS, MAGPIES, AND NIGHTINGALES.

As this was the blessed Sabbath day, Benvenuto did nothing more than play tennis, rest after playing, and inspect his new property. But on the following day the work of moving began, and was fully completed two days later, by virtue of the assistance of his new companions. On the third day Benvenuto resumed his modelling as calmly as if nothing had happened.

When the provost realized that he was definitively vanquished, when he learned that Benvenuto's studio, tools, and workmen were actually installed at the Grand-Nesle, rage took possession of him once more, and he began to plot and plan for vengeance. He was in one of his most wrathful moments when the Vicomte de Marmagne surprised him on the morning of this same third day, Wednesday. Marmagne could not resist the longing to gratify his vanity by triumphing over the sorrows and reverses of his friends, as every man who is a coward and an idiot loves to do.

"Well!" he said, "I told you so, my dear Provost."

"Ah! is it you, Viscount? Good morning."

"Well! was I right or wrong?"

"Alas! right. Are you well?"

"At all events I have no reason to reproach myself in this accursed business. I gave you sufficient warning."

"Has the king returned to the Louvre?"

“ ‘Nonsense!’ you said; ‘a workman, a nobody, a fine sight it will be!’ You have seen it, my poor friend.”

“I asked you if his Majesty has returned from Fontainebleau?”

“Yes, and he keenly regrets not having reached Paris on Sunday, in order to look on from one of his towers at his goldsmith’s victory over his provost.”

“What is said at court?”

“Why, they say that you were thoroughly whipped.”

“Hum!” said the provost, who began to be annoyed by this desultory conversation.

“How was it? Did he really give you such an ignominious whipping?”

“Why — ”

“He killed two of your men, did he not?”

“I think so.”

“If you wish to replace them, I have two Italian bravos, consummate fighting-men, who are quite at your service. You will have to pay them well, but they are sure men.”

“We shall see: I won’t say no. If not for myself, I may require them for my son in law, Comte d’Orbec.”

“Whatever they may say, I cannot believe that this Benvenuto cudgelled you personally.”

“Who says so?”

“Everybody. Some are indignant, like myself; others laugh, like the king.”

“Enough! we have not seen the end of this affair.”

“Ah! you were very wrong to compromise yourself with such a clown, and for such a paltry affair!”

“I shall fight for my honor henceforth.”

“If there had been a woman in the affair, why, you might properly have drawn your sword against such people: but for a mere place to sleep in — ”

"The Hôtel de Nesle is a place for princes to sleep in."

"Agreed; but even so, think of exposing yourself for such a matter to be chastised by a blackguard!"

"Ah! I have an idea, Marmagne," said the provost. "Parbleu! you are so devoted to me that I long to render you a friendly service, and I am delighted to have the opportunity now. For a nobleman, and secretary to the king, you are wretchedly located on Rue de la Huchette, my dear Viscount. Now I recently requested for a friend of mine, from the Duchesse d'Etampes, who refuses nothing that I ask, apartments in such one of the king's palaces as my friend might select. I obtained the privilege for him, not without difficulty, but it so happens that he has been called to Spain on urgent business. I have therefore at my disposal the document signed by the king containing this grant of apartments. I cannot make use of it myself; will you have it? I should be happy to acknowledge thus your services and your generous friendship."

"Dear D'Estourville, how can I ever repay you? It is quite true that I am living in very unsuitable quarters, and I have complained to the king a score of times."

"I shall insist upon one condition."

"What is that?"

"That, inasmuch as you are at liberty to take your choice among all the royal hotels, you will choose —"

"Go on, I am waiting."

"The Hôtel de Nesle."

"Aha! you were laying a trap for me."

"Not at all; and to show you that I am speaking seriously, here is the document, duly signed by his Majesty, with the necessary blanks for the name of the beneficiary,

and of the place selected. I will write the *Hôtel du Grand-Nesle*, and leave you to insert such names as you choose."

"But this damned *Benvenuto*?"

"Is entirely off his guard, relying upon a treaty we entered into and signed. Whoever cares to enter will find the doors open, and if on a Sunday he will find the rooms empty. In any event, it's not a matter of turning *Benvenuto* out, but simply of sharing the *Grand-Nesle* with him; for it is quite large enough for three or four families. *Benvenuto* will hear reason. — Well! what are you doing now?"

"I am writing my names and titles in the grant. Do you see?"

"Beware! *Benvenuto* is more to be feared than you think."

"Bah! I will take my two fire-eaters and surprise him some Sunday."

"What! compromise yourself with a clown for such a trifling matter?"

"A victor is always right; and then, too, I shall be avenging a friend."

"Good luck to you then; I have given you fair warning, *Marmagne*."

"Thanks twice over,—once for the gift and once for the warning."

And *Marmagne*, delighted beyond measure, thrust the precious paper in his pocket, and set out in all haste to make sure of his two bravos.

"Very good!" said *Messire d'Estourville*, rubbing his hands and looking after him. "Go on, *Viscount*, and one of two things will come of it,—either you will avenge me for *Benvenuto*'s victory, or *Benvenuto* will avenge me for your sarcasm; in any case, I shall be the

gainer. I make my enemies enemies of each other; let them fight and kill; I will applaud every blow on either side, for all will be equally gratifying to me."

Let us now cross the Seine and look in upon the occupants of the Grand-Nesle, and see how they were employing their time, pending the results of the provost's militant hatred.

Benvenuto, in the tranquil confidence of conscious strength, had quietly resumed the work he had in hand, without suspecting or caring for Messire d'Estourville's animosity. His day was divided thus. He rose at day-break, and went at once to a small, isolated room that he had discovered in the garden, above the foundry, with a window from which one could look obliquely into the flower garden of the Petit-Nesle; there he worked during the forenoon upon the model of a small statue of Hebe. After dinner, that is to say, at one o'clock in the afternoon, he went to the studio and worked at his Jupiter; in the evening, for relaxation, he played a game of tennis, or went for a walk.

Now let us see how Catherine employed her time. She sewed and sang and ran hither and thither, instinct with joyous life, much more at her ease in the Grand-Nesle than at the Cardinal of Ferrara's palace.

Ascanio, whose wound made it impossible for him to work, did not find the time irksome, notwithstanding the activity of his mind, for he was dreaming.

If now, availing ourselves of the thief's privilege of climbing walls, we enter the Petit-Nesle, this is what we shall see there. In the first place, Colombe, in her chamber, dreaming like Ascanio. We beg leave to pause here for the moment; all that we can say is, that, while Ascanio's dreams were rose-colored, poor Colombe's were black as night. And then here is Dame Perrine

just setting out to market, and we must, if you please, follow her for an instant.

For a long time — so at least it seems to us — we have lost sight of the good dame; indeed, it must be said that courage was not her predominating virtue, and amid the perilous encounters we have described she had purposely kept herself out of sight. But when peace began to bloom once more, the roses reappeared in her cheeks, and as Benvenuto resumed his artistic labors she peaceably resumed her joyous humor, her chattering, her gossip's inquisitiveness, — in a word, the practice of all the excellent housewifely qualities.

Dame Perrine on her way to market was obliged to pass across the common courtyard, for the new door for the Petit-Nesle was not yet made. Now it happened, by the merest chance, that Ruperta, Benvenuto's old maid-servant, was setting out at precisely the same moment to purchase her master's dinner. These two estimable individuals were much too well suited to each other to share the antipathies of their masters; so they walked along together on the best possible terms, and, as talking shortens the longest road by half, they talked.

Ruperta began by inquiring of Dame Perrine the price of various articles, and the names of the dealers in the quarter: from that they passed to more interesting subjects.

"Is your master such a terrible man?" queried Dame Perrine.

"Terrible! when you don't offend him he is as gentle as a Jesus; but, *dame!* when one doesn't do as he wishes, I must say that he's not very agreeable. He is fond, oh! very fond, of having his own way. That's his mania; and when he once gets a thing in his head, all the five hundred thousand devils in hell can't drive it

out. But you can lead him like a child by pretending to obey him, and it's very pleasant to hear him talk. You should hear him say to me, 'Dame Ruperta,' (he calls me Ruperta in his strange pronunciation, although my real name is Ruperte, at your service,) 'Dame Ruperta, this is an excellent leg of mutton, and done to a turn; Dame Ruperta, your beans are seasoned most triumphantly; Dame Ruperta, I look upon you as the queen of governesses,'—and all this so winningly that it touches one to the heart."

"*A la bonne heure!* But he kills people, they say."

"Oh yes! when he's crossed, he kills very handily. It's a custom of his country; but it's only when he's attacked, and then only in self-defence. Otherwise he is very light-hearted and prepossessing."

"I haven't seen him myself. He has red hair, hasn't he?"

"No indeed! His hair is as black as yours and mine,—as mine was, that is. Ah! you have never seen him? Well, just come in casually some time to borrow something, and I'll show him to you. He's a handsome man, and would make a superb archer."

"Apropos of handsome men, how is our comely youth to-day? The wounded man, I mean, the attractive young apprentice who received such a terrible wound in saving the provost's life."

"Ascanio? Pray do you know him?"

"Do I know him! He promised my young mistress Colombe and myself to show us his jewels. Remind him of it, if you please, my dear madame. But all this does n't answer my question, and Colombe will be very glad to know that her father's savior is out of danger."

"Oh! you can tell her that he is doing very well. He got up just now. But the surgeon has forbidden his

leaving his room, although I think a breath of fresh air would do him a world of good. It's out of the question, though, in this burning sun. Your Grand-Nesle garden is a veritable desert. Not a shaded spot anywhere; no - vegetation but nettles and briars, and four or five leafless trees. It's enormous, but very unpleasant to walk in. Our master consoles himself with tennis, but poor Ascanio isn't well enough yet to hold a racket, and must be bored to death. He's so active, the dear boy, — I speak of him in that way because he's my favorite, and is always courteous to his elders. He's not like that bear of a Pagolo, or Catherine the giddy-pate."

"And you say that the poor fellow —"

"Must be eating his heart out with having to pass whole days on a couch in his bedroom."

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed kind-hearted Dame Perrine, "pray tell the poor boy to come over to the Petit-Nesle, where there is such beautiful shade. I will gladly admit him, although Messire le Prévôt has expressly forbidden it. Why, it would be most virtuous in me to disobey him, in order to benefit the man who saved his life. And you talk of ennui! We are the ones who are drying up with it. The comely apprentice will divert us; he will tell us tales of his Italy, and show us his necklaces and bracelets, and chatter with Colombe. Young folks like to be together and prattle, and they languish in solitude. So it's agreed, isn't it? Just tell your Benjamin that he's at liberty to come and walk in our garden whenever he pleases, provided he comes alone, or with you, Dame Ruperte, to give him your arm. Knock four times, the first three gently and the last louder: I shall know what it means, and I will come and open the door."

"Thanks for Ascanio and myself; I will not fail to

tell him of your amiable offer, and he will not fail to avail himself of it."

"I am delighted to think so, Dame Ruperte."

"*Au revoir*, Dame Perrine! Charmed to have made the acquaintance of such an estimable person."

"The same to you, Dame Ruperte."

The two gossips bowed low to each other, and parted with mutual satisfaction.

The gardens of the Séjour de Nesle were in truth, as Ruperta said, dry and scorched on one side of the wall, cool and shady as a forest on the other. The provost's miserly instinct led him to leave the garden of the Grand-Nesle uncared for, as the cost of keeping it in condition would have been considerable, and he was not sufficiently sure of his title to renew, perhaps for the benefit of his successor, the trees which he had lost no time in cutting down as soon as he took possession. His daughter's presence at the Petit-Nesle accounted for his leaving the shady thickets there untouched, as the poor child had no other recreation than to sit beneath them. Raimbault and his two assistants sufficed to keep Colombe's garden in order, and even to embellish it somewhat.

It was laid out and planted in extremely good taste. At the back was the kitchen garden, Dame Perrine's kingdom; along the wall dividing it from the Grand-Nesle Colombe had her flower garden, called by Dame Perrine the Morning Avenue, because the sun's early rays fell full upon it, and sunrise was the time ordinarily selected by Colombe to water her marguerites and roses. Let us note, in passing, that from the room over the foundry in the Grand-Nesle one could see every movement of the lovely gardener without being seen. Following out Dame Perrine's geographical nomenclature, there was the Noonday Avenue, terminated by a thicket

where Colombe loved to sit, and read or embroider, during the heat of the day. At the other end of the garden was the Evening Avenue, planted with a triple row of lindens, which made it delightfully cool and fresh: it was here that Colombe was accustomed to walk after supper.

This last named avenue Dame Perrine had in mind as a spot well adapted to hasten the convalescence of the wounded Ascanio. She was very careful, however, to say nothing to Colombe of her charitable intentions. It was possible that she would be too obedient to her father's commands, and would refuse to concur in her governess's open defiance of them. And in that case what would Dame Ruperta think of her neighbor's authority and influence? No; since she had gone so far, perhaps a little recklessly, she must go on to the end. Indeed, the good woman's offence was excusable when we reflect that she had no one but Colombe to whom she could speak from morning till night, and more often than not Colombe was so deeply absorbed in her own thoughts that she did not reply.

The reader will readily understand Ascanio's ecstasy when he learned that paradise was open to him, and how fervently he blessed Ruperta. He insisted upon availing himself of his good fortune on the instant, and Ruperta had all the difficulty in the world in persuading him that he ought at least to wait until evening. He had every reason to believe that Dame Perrine's suggestion was made with Colombe's sanction, and that thought made him mad with joy. With how great impatience, therefore, mingled with vague alarm, did he count the dragging hours! At last, at last, the clock struck five. The apprentices left the studio. Benvenuto had been away since noon, and was believed to have gone to the Louvre.

Thereupon Ruperta said solemnly to the apprentice, who gazed at her as she had not been gazed at for many a year: —

“Now that the time has come, follow me, young man.”

They crossed the courtyard together, and she knocked four times at the door leading into the precincts of the Petit-Nesle.

“Say nothing of this to the master, good Ruperta,” said Ascanio, who knew that Cellini was a good deal of a scoffer and sceptic in the matter of love, and did not choose to have his pure flame profaned by his witticisms.

Ruperta was on the point of making inquiries as to the reason for this injunction, which it would be hard for her to obey, when the door opened and Dame Perrine appeared.

“Come in, my fine fellow,” she said. “How are you to-day? Pallor becomes you, do you know: it’s a pleasure to look at you. Come in also, Dame Ruperta: take the path to the left, young man, Colombe is just coming down to the garden; it’s the time when she always walks. Do you try and persuade her not to scold me too severely for admitting you.”

“What!” cried Ascanio,—“Mademoiselle Colombe does n’t know —”

“No indeed! Do you think she would have consented to disobey her father? I have brought her up on correct principles. I disobeyed for both, myself. Faith! I don’t care! we can’t always live like hermits. Raimbault won’t see anything, or, if he does, I have a way to make him hold his tongue; if worse comes to worst, it won’t be the first time I have held my own against Monsieur le Prévôt!”

Dame Perrine was very loquacious concerning her master, but Ruperta alone followed her in what she

said. Ascanio was standing still, listening to nothing save the beating of his heart. He did, however, hear these words, let fall by Dame Perrine as they moved away:—

“This is the path where Colombe walks every evening, and she will soon be here without doubt. You see that the sun won’t reach you here, my gallant invalid.”

Ascanio expressed his thanks with a gesture, and walked forward a few steps, once more immersed in his reverie, and anticipating what was to come with mingled anxiety and impatience. He heard Dame Perrine say to Ruperta as they walked along,—

“This is Colombe’s favorite bench.”

And upon that he left the two gossiping to continue their walk and their conversation, and sat softly down without a word upon the sacred seat.

What was his purpose? whither was he going? He had no idea. He sought Colombe because she was young and fair, and he was young and fair. No ambitious thought had ever entered his head in connection with her. To be near her was his only desire: for the rest he put his trust in God, or, rather, he did not look so far into the future. There is no to-morrow in love.

Colombe, for her part, had thought more than once, and in spite of herself, of the young stranger who had appeared to her in her loneliness as Gabriel appeared to Mary. To see him once more had been from the first the secret desire of this child, who had hitherto had no desire. But, being abandoned by an inconsiderate father to the guardianship of her own virtue, she was too high-minded not to deal with herself with the severity which noble souls never think themselves free to dispense with unless their will is fettered. She therefore bravely put aside her thoughts of Ascanio, and yet those thoughts

persisted in forcing a way through the triple ramparts Colombe had built around her heart, more easily than Ascanio made his way through the wall of the Grand-Nesle. So it was that Colombe had passed the three or four days since the engagement, alternating between the fear of not seeing Ascanio again, and alarm at the thought of being in his presence. Her only consolation was to dream of him as she sat at her work or walked in the garden. During the day she shut herself up in her own room, to the despair of Dame Perrine, who was thereby doomed to carry on a perpetual monologue in the abyss of her own thoughts. As soon as the intense heat of the day had gone by, she would go down to the cool, shady path, poetically christened by Dame Perrine the Evening Avenue, and there, sitting on the bench where Ascanio now sat, she would allow the sun to set and the stars to rise, listening and replying to her thoughts, until Dame Perrine came to tell her that it was time to retire.

At the usual hour, then, the young man saw Colombe suddenly appear, book in hand, at the end of the path where he was sitting. She was reading the "Lives of the Saints," a dangerous romance of faith and love, well adapted, perhaps, to prepare one for the cruel sufferings of life, but not, surely, for the cold realities of the world. Colombe did not see Ascanio at first, but started back in surprise when she saw a strange woman with Dame Perrine. At that decisive moment, Dame Perrine, like a determined general, plunged boldly to the heart of the question.

"Dear Colombe," she said, "I know your kind heart so well that I did n't think I needed your express sanction to allow a poor wounded youth, who received his wound in your father's cause, to come and take the air under these trees. You know there is no shade at the Grand-

Nesle, and the surgeon won't answer for his life unless he can walk an hour every day."

While she was uttering this well intentioned but barefaced falsehood, Colombe suddenly spied Ascanio, and a vivid flush suffused her cheeks. The apprentice, meanwhile, in the presence of Colombe, could hardly summon strength to rise to his feet.

"It was n't my sanction that was necessary, Dame Perrine," said the maiden at last, "but my father's."

As she said these words, sadly but firmly, Colombe reached the stone bench upon which Ascanio had been sitting.

He overheard her, and said, with clasped hands:—

"Forgive me, Madame. I thought—I hoped that your kindness had ratified Dame Perrine's courteous offer; but if it is not so," he continued, in a tone of great gentleness, not unmixed with pride, "I beg you to excuse my involuntary boldness, and I will withdraw at once."

"But it is not for me to decide," replied Colombe hastily, deeply moved. "I am not mistress here. Remain to-day at all events, even if my father's prohibition was meant to extend to him who saved his life: remain, Monsieur, if for nothing else than to receive my thanks."

"O Madame!" murmured Ascanio, "it is for me to thank you, and I do so from the bottom of my heart. But by remaining shall I not interfere with your walk? The place I have taken, too, is ill chosen."

"Not at all," rejoined Colombe mechanically, without apparently paying attention, so embarrassed was she, to the other end of the stone bench.

At that moment Dame Perrine, who had not stirred since Colombe's mortifying reprimand, growing weary of her own immobility and her young mistress's silence, took Dame Ruperta's arm and walked softly away.

The young people were left alone.

Colombe, whose eyes were fixed upon her book, did not at first observe the departure of her governess, and yet she was not reading, for there was a mist before her eyes. She was still excited and dizzy. All that she was capable of doing, and that she did instinctively, was to conceal her agitation, and repress the violent beating of her heart. Ascanio, too, was beside himself; he was excessively pained when he thought that Colombe desired to send him away, and insanely happy when he fancied that he could detect signs of emotion in his inamorata; and these sudden alternations of emotion in his enfeebled state transported and unnerved him at the same time. He was like one in a swoon, and yet his thoughts followed upon one another's heels with astounding rapidity and force. "She despises me! she loves me!" he said to himself almost in the same breath. He glanced at Colombe, silent and still, and the tears rolled down his cheeks, although he felt them not. Meanwhile a bird was singing in the branches overhead; the leaves were scarcely stirring in the gentle breeze. From the Augustine church the evening Angelus came floating softly downward through the air. Never was July evening more calm and peaceful. It was one of Nature's solemn moments, when the soul enters a new sphere,—one of those moments which seem twenty years, and which one remembers all his life.

The two lovely children, so well suited to each other, had but to move their hands to join them, and yet it seemed as if there were a yawning gulf between them.

After a moment or two Colombe raised her head:—

"You are weeping!" she cried, obeying an impulse stronger than her will.

"I am not weeping," said Ascanio, falling back upon

the bench; but his hands were wet with tears when he took them from his face.

"It is true," he said, "I am weeping."

"Why, what is the matter? I will call some one. Are you in pain?"

"Only from my thoughts."

"What thoughts, pray?"

"I was thinking that perhaps it would have been better for me to die the other day."

"Die! How old are you, pray, that you should talk thus of dying?"

"Nineteen: but the age of unhappiness is a fit age for death."

"And what of your kindred, who would weep for you?" said Colombe, unconsciously eager for a glimpse into the past of this life, of which she had a confused feeling that the future would be involved with her own.

"I have no father or mother, and there is no one to weep for me save my master, Benvenuto."

"Poor orphan!"

"Yes, an orphan indeed! My father never loved me, and I lost my mother at ten years, just when I was beginning to understand her love and return it. My father — But what am I saying, and what are my father and my mother to you?"

"Oh, yes! Go on, Ascanio."

"Saints in heaven! you remember my name!"

"Go on, go on," whispered Colombe, putting her hands before her face to hide her blushes.

"My father was a goldsmith, and my dear mother was herself the daughter of a Florentine goldsmith, named Raphael del Moro, of a noble Italian family; for in our Italian republics, to work implies no dishonor, and you will see more than one ancient and illustrious name on

the sign of a shop. My master, Cellini, for example, is as noble as the King of France, if not even more so. Raphael del Moro, who was poor, compelled his daughter Stefana to marry, against her will, a fellow goldsmith almost of his own age, but very wealthy. Alas! my mother and Benvenuto Cellini loved each other, but were both fortuneless. Benvenuto was travelling everywhere to make a name for himself and earn money. He was far away, and could not interfere to prevent the marriage. Gismondo Gaddi (that was my father's name) soon began to detest his wife because she did not love him, although he never knew that she loved somebody else. My father was a man of a violent and jealous disposition. May he forgive me if I accuse him wrongfully, but children have a relentless memory for their wrongs. Very often my mother sought shelter by my cradle from his brutal treatment, but he did not always respect that sanctuary. Sometimes he struck her, may God forgive him! while she held me in her arms: and at every blow my mother would give me a kiss to help deaden the pain. Ah! I remember well both the blows my mother received and the kisses she gave me.

"The Lord, who is just, dealt a blow at my father where he would feel it most keenly, — in his wealth, which was dearer to him than anything else in the world. Disaster after disaster overwhelmed him. He died of grief because his money was all gone, and my mother died a few days after, because she thought that she was no longer beloved.

"I was left alone in the world. My father's creditors laid hands upon all that he left, and, in all their ferreting to make sure that they had forgotten nothing, they failed to discover a little weeping child. An old maid-servant who was fond of me kept me two days from

charity, but she was living on charity herself, and had none too much bread for her own needs.

"She was uncertain what to do with me, when a man covered with dust entered the room, took me in his arms, embraced me, weeping, and, having given the good old woman some money, took me away with him. It was Benvenuto Cellini, who had come from Rome to Florence expressly to find me. He cherished me, instructed me in his art, and kept me always with him, and, as I say he is the only one who would weep for my death."

Colombe listened with lowered eyes and oppressed heart to the orphan's story, which in the matter of loneliness was her own, and to the story of the poor mother's life, which would perhaps be hers some day; for she too was doomed to marry against her will a man who would hate her because she would not love him.

"You are unjust to God," she said to Ascanio; "there is some one, your kind master at least, who loves you, and you knew your mother. I cannot remember my mother's kisses, for she died in giving birth to me. I was brought up by my father's sister, a crabbed, ill-tempered woman, and yet I mourned her bitterly when I lost her two years ago, for in the absence of any other affection my heart clung to her as ivy clings to a cliff. For two years I have been living in this place with Dame Perrine, and notwithstanding my loneliness, and although my father comes very rarely to see me, these two years have been and will be the happiest of my whole life."

"You have indeed suffered much," said Ascanio, "but though the past has been so painful, why do you dread the future? Yours, alas! is full of glorious promise. You are nobly born, rich, and beautiful, and the shadow of your early years will only bring out in bolder relief the splendor of the rest of your life."

Colombe sadly shook her head.

"Oh mother! mother!" she murmured.

When, rising in thought above the paltry present, one loses sight of the trivial necessities of the moment in the brilliant flashes which illuminate and epitomize a whole life, past and future, the heart is sometimes affected with a dangerous vertigo; and when one's memory is laden with a thousand sorrows, when one dreads bitter anguish to come, the same heart is often a prey to terrible emotion and fatal weakness. One must be very strong not to fall when the weight of destiny is pressing down upon one's heart. These two children, who had already suffered so much, who had been always alone, had but to pronounce a single word to make a single future for their twofold past; but one was too dutiful, the other too respectful, to pronounce that word.

Ascanio gazed at Colombe, however, with infinite tenderness in his eyes, and Colombe permitted his scrutiny with divine trust. With clasped hands, and in the tone in which he might have prayed, the apprentice said to the maiden:—

"Colombe, if you have any desire which I can gratify by pouring out all my blood to gratify it, if any disaster threatens you, and nothing more than a life is needed to avert it, say one word to me, Colombe, as you might say it to your brother, and I shall be very happy."

"Thanks, thanks!" said Colombe; "I know that you have already nobly risked your life once at a word from me; but God alone can save me this time."

She had no time to say more, for Dame Perrine and Dame Ruperta stopped in front of them at that moment.

The gossips had made the most of their time, as well as the two lovers, and had formed a close alliance, based upon mutual sympathy. Dame Perrine had confided to

Dame Ruperta an infallible cure for chilblains, and Dame Ruperta, not to be outdone, had imparted to Dame Perrine the secret of preserving plums. After such an exchange of confidence, it is easy to understand that they were thenceforth united for life and death, and they had agreed to meet frequently, whatever the cost.

"Well, Colombe," said Dame Perrine, as they drew nigh the bench, "do you still bear me a grudge? Tell me, would n't it have been a shame to refuse admission to him but for whom the house would have no master? Should n't we do our utmost to help cure this youth of a wound received for us? Look, Dame Ruperta, and see if he does n't already look better, and if he has n't more color than when he came."

"Yes indeed," assented Ruperta, "he never had more color when he was in the best of health."

"Consider, Colombe," continued Dame Perrine, "it would be downright murder to interrupt convalescence so happily begun. Come, the end justifies the means. You will allow me to admit him to-morrow at dusk, won't you? It will be a pleasant change for you as well, poor child, and a very innocent one, God knows, when Dame Ruperta and I are both here. Upon my word, Colombe, you need some sort of a change. And who is there to tell the provost that we have softened his stern orders a bit? And remember that, before he gave the order, you told Ascanio that he might come and show you his jewels; he forgot them to-day, so he must bring them to-morrow."

Colombe looked at Ascanio; the color had fled from his cheeks, and he was awaiting her reply in an agony of suspense.

In the eyes of a poor girl, kept a prisoner and tyrannized over, there was a world of flattery in this humility

There was then some one in the world whose happiness depended upon her, whom she could make glad or sad with a word! Every one exults in his own power. The insolent airs of Comte d'Orbec had humiliated Colombe very recently. The hapless prisoner — forgive her, pray! — could not resist the longing to see the joyful light shine in Ascanio's eyes, so she said, with a blush and a smile, —

"Dame Perrine, what is this you have persuaded me to do?"

Ascanio tried to speak, but could only clasp his hands effusively; his knees trembled under him.

"Thanks, fair lady!" said Ruperta, with a deep courtesy. "Come, Ascanio, you are still weak, and it is time to go in. Give me your arm, and let us go."

The apprentice could hardly muster strength to say "Adieu" and "Thanks!" but he supplemented his words with a look in which his heart spoke volumes, and meekly followed the servant, his whole being overflowing with joy.

Colombe fell back upon the bench, absorbed in thought, and conscious of a pleasurable excitement, for which she reproached herself, and which was entirely unfamiliar to her.

"Until to-morrow!" said Dame Perrine, triumphantly, as she took leave of her guests after escorting them to the door; "if you choose, young man, you can come in this way every day for three months."

"And why for three months only?" asked Ascanio, who had dreamed of coming always.

"*Dame!*" was Dame Perrine's reply, "because in three months Colombe is to marry Comte d'Orbec."

Ascanio needed all the strength of his will to keep from falling.

"Colombe to marry Comte d'Orbec!" he muttered. "O mon Dieu! mon Dieu! so I deceived myself! Colombe does not love me!"

As Dame Perrine closed the door behind him at that moment, and Dame Ruperta was walking in front of him, neither of them overheard.

XII

THE KING'S QUEEN.

WE have said that Benvenuto left the studio about noon without saying whither he was going. He went to the Louvre to return the visit François I. paid him at the Cardinal of Ferrara's hotel.

The king had kept his word. The name of Benvenuto Cellini was given to all the doorkeepers and ushers, and all the doors flew open before him,—all the doors save one, that leading to the council chamber. François was discussing affairs of state with the first men in his realm, and, although the king's orders were explicit, they dared not introduce Cellini in the midst of the momentous session then in progress without further instructions from his Majesty.

In truth, France was at this time in a critical situation. We have thus far said but little of affairs of state, feeling sure that our readers, especially those of the gentler sex, would prefer affairs of the heart to politics; but we have at last reached a point where we can no longer draw back, and where we must needs cast a glance, which we will make as brief as possible, at France and Spain, or rather at François I. and Charles V., for in the sixteenth century kings were nations.

At the period at which we have arrived, by virtue of one of the periodical movements of the political see-saw, of which both so often felt the effects, François's situation had recently improved, and Charles's grown worse

in equal degree. In fact, things had changed materially since the Treaty of Cambrai, which was negotiated by two women, Margaret of Austria, aunt of Charles V., and the Duchesse d'Angoulême, mother of François I. This treaty, which was the complement of the treaty of Madrid, provided that the King of Spain should cede Burgundy to the King of France, and that the King of France should renounce his claim to the homage of Flanders and Artois. Furthermore, the two young princes, who served as hostages for their father, were to be sent back to him in exchange for the sum of two millions of golden crowns. Lastly, good Queen Eleanora, Charles V.'s sister, who was promised at first to the Constable (Bourbon) as a reward for his treachery, and was afterwards married to François as a pledge of peace, was to return to the court of France with the two children, to whom she had been as affectionate and devoted as any mother. These stipulations were carried out with equal good faith on both sides.

But it will readily be believed that François's renunciation of his claim to the Duchy of Milan, exacted from him during his captivity, was only momentary. He was no sooner a free man once more, no sooner restored to power and health, than he turned his eyes again toward Italy. It was with the object of procuring countenance of his claims at the Court of Rome that he had married his son Henri, become Dauphin by the death of his elder brother François, to Catherine de Medicis, niece of Pope Clement VII.

Unfortunately, just at the moment when all the preparations for the king's meditated invasion were completed, Clement VII. died, and was succeeded by Alexander Farnese, who ascended the throne of St. Peter under the name of Paul III.

Now Paul III. was determined not to allow himself to be inveigled into supporting the party of the Emperor, or of the King of France, but to adhere strictly to the policy of holding an equal balance between them.

With his mind at ease in that direction, the Emperor laid aside all anxiety on the subject of the preparations of France, and busied himself fitting out an expedition against Tunis, which had been seized by the corsair Cher-Eddin, so famous under the name of Barbarossa, who, having driven out Muley Hassan, had taken possession of the country, and was laying Sicily waste.

The expedition was entirely successful, and Charles V., after destroying three or four ships, sailed into the Bay of Naples in triumph.

There he received tidings which tended to encourage him still more. Charles III., Duke of Savoy, although he was the maternal uncle of François I., had followed the counsel of his new wife, Beatrice, daughter of Emmanuel of Portugal, and had abandoned the party of the King of France; so that when François, by virtue of his former treaties with Charles III., called upon him to receive his troops, the Duke of Savoy answered by refusing to do so, and François was reduced to the unenviable necessity of forcing the passage of the Alps, which he had hoped to find open to him by favor of his ally and kinsman.

But Charles V. was awakened from his feeling of security by a veritable thunder-clap. The king marched an army into Savoy so promptly that the duke found his province actually under occupation by the French troops before he suspected that it was invaded. Biron, who was in command of the army, seized Chambéry, appeared upon the Alpine passes, and threatened Piedmont just as Francesco Sforza, terror-stricken doubtless by the news

of Biron's success, died suddenly, leaving the Duchy of Milan without an heir, and thereby not only making its conquest an easy matter for François, but giving him a strong claim to it as well.

Biron marched down into Italy, and seized Turin. There he halted, pitched his camp on the banks of the Sesia, and awaited developments.

Charles V. meanwhile had left Naples for Rome. The victory he had won over the long-time enemies of Christ procured him the honor of a triumphal entry into the capital of Christendom. This entry intoxicated the Emperor to such a point, that, contrary to his custom, he went beyond all bounds, and in full consistory accused François I. of heresy, basing the accusation upon the protection he accorded the Protestants, and upon his alliance with the Turks. Having recapitulated all their former causes of disagreement, wherein, according to his view, François was always the first at fault, he swore to wage a war of extermination against his brother-in-law.

His disasters in the past had made François as prudent as he formerly was reckless. And so, as soon as he found himself threatened at one time by the forces of Spain and of the Empire, he left D'Annebaut to guard Turin, and called Biron back to France, with orders to devote himself entirely to protecting the frontiers.

Those who were familiar with the chivalrous and enterprising character of François were at a loss to understand this retrograde movement, and supposed from his taking one backward step that he considered himself whipped in advance. This belief still further exalted the pride of Charles V.; he took command of his army in person, and resolved upon invading France from the south.

The results of this attempted invasion are well known.

Marseilles, which had held out against the Connétable de Bourbon and the Marquis of Pescara, the two greatest soldiers of the time, had no difficulty in holding out against Charles V., a great politician, but of only moderate capacity as a general. Charles was not discouraged, but left Marseilles behind, and attempted to march upon Avignon; but Montmorency had constructed an impregnable camp between the Durance and the Rhone, against which Charles expended his force to no purpose. So that, after six weeks of fruitless endeavor, repulsed in front, harassed upon the flanks, and in great danger of having his retreat cut off, he ordered a retreat which strongly resembled a rout, and, having narrowly escaped falling into his enemy's hands, succeeded with great difficulty in reaching Barcelona, where he arrived without men or money.

Thereupon all those who were awaiting the issue of his expedition to declare themselves declared against Charles V. Henry VIII. cast off his wife, Catherine of Aragon, in order to espouse his mistress, Anne Boleyn. Soliman attacked the kingdom of Naples and Hungary. The Protestant princes of Germany entered into a secret league against the Emperor. Lastly, the people of Ghent, weary of the incessant burdens imposed upon them to defray the expense of the war against France, suddenly rose in revolt, and sent ambassadors to François to invite him to place himself at their head.

But amid this universal upheaval, which threatened to destroy the Emperor's fortunes, new negotiations were entered upon by the King of France and himself. The two monarchs had an interview at Aignes-Mortes, and François, bent upon peace, which he felt to be an absolute necessity for France, was determined thenceforth to rely upon friendly negotiations to effect his objects, and not upon an armed struggle.

He therefore caused Charles to be informed of the proposition of the men of Ghent, offering him at the same time liberty to pass through France on his way to Flanders.

The council had been called together to discuss this subject, when Benvenuto knocked at the door, and François, true to his promise, as soon as he was advised of the great artist's presence, ordered that he be admitted. Benvenuto therefore heard the end of the discussion.

"Yes, messieurs," François was saying, "yes, I agree with Monsieur de Montmorency, and it is my dream to conclude a lasting alliance with the Emperor elect, to raise our two thrones above all the rest of Christendom, and to wipe out all these corporations, communes, and popular assemblies which assume to set bounds to our royal power by refusing us to-day the arms, to-morrow the money, of our subjects. My dream is to force back into the bosom of the true religion all the heresies which distress our holy Mother Church. My dream is, lastly, to unite all our forces against the enemies of Christ, to drive the Turkish Sultan from Constantinople, were it only to prove that he is not, as he is alleged to be, my ally, and to establish at Constantinople a second empire rivalling the first in power, in splendor, and in extent. That is my dream, messieurs, and I have given it that name so that I may not allow myself to be unduly exalted by hope of success, nor unduly cast down if the future shall demonstrate, as it may, its impracticability. But if it should be fulfilled, constable, if it should be fulfilled, if I were to have France and Turkey, Paris and Constantinople, the Occident and the Orient, confess, messieurs, that it would be grand,—that it would be sublime!"

"I understand, then, Sire," said the Duc de Guise,

"that it is definitely decided that you decline the suzerainty proffered you by the Ghentese, and that you renounce the former domains of the house of Burgundy?"

"It is so decided: the Emperor shall see that I am an ally as loyal as I am a loyal foe. But first of all, and in any event, I desire and shall demand that the Duchy of Milan be restored to me: it belongs to me by hereditary right and by imperial investiture, and I will have it, on my honor as a gentleman, but, I trust, without breaking with my brother Charles."

"And you will offer to allow Charles V. to pass through France on his way to Ghent to chastise the rebels?" asked Poyet.

"Yes, Monsieur le Chancelier," was the king's reply; "despatch M. de Fréjus to-day to extend the invitation in my name. Let us show him that we are disposed to go any length to maintain peace. But if he prefers war —"

A majestic, awe-inspiring gesture accompanied this phrase, interrupted for an instant as François caught sight of his artist standing modestly near the door.

"But if he prefers war," he resumed, "by my Jupiter, of whom Benvenuto brings me news, I swear that it shall be war bloody, desperate, and terrible! Well, Benvenuto, where is my Jupiter?"

"Sire," replied Cellini, "I bring you the model of your Jupiter: but do you know of what I was dreaming as I looked at you and listened to you? I was dreaming of a fountain for your Fontainebleau,—a fountain to be surmounted by a colossal statue sixty feet high, holding a broken lance in its right hand, and with the left resting on its sword hilt. This statue, Sire, should represent Mars,—that is to say, your Majesty; for your nature is all courage, and you use your courage judi-

ciously, and for the defence of your glory. Stay, Sire, that is not all: at the four corners of the base of the statue there should be four seated figures, — Poetry, Painting, Sculpture, and Generosity. Of that I was dreaming as I looked at you and listened to you, Sire."

"And you shall cause your dream to live in marble or bronze, Benvenuto: such is my wish," said the king in a commanding tone, but with a cordial, kindly smile.

All the members of the council applauded, for all deemed the king worthy of the statue, and the statue worthy of the king.

"Meanwhile," said the king, "let us see our Jupiter."

Benvenuto drew the model from beneath his cloak, and placed it upon the table, around which the destiny of the world had so recently been debated.

François gazed at it for a moment with undisguised admiration.

"At last!" he cried, "at last I have found a man after my own heart. My friend," he continued, laying his hand upon Benvenuto's shoulder, "I know not which of the two experiences the greater happiness, the prince who finds an artist who thoroughly sympathizes with and understands all his ideas, such an artist as yourself in short, or the artist who meets a prince capable of appreciating him. I think that my pleasure is the greater, upon my word."

"Oh no, Sire, permit me!" cried Cellini; "surely mine is much the greater."

"No, mine, Benvenuto."

"I dare not contradict your Majesty, and yet —"

"Let us say that we experience an equal amount of pleasure, my friend."

"You have called me your friend, Sire," said Benvenuto; "that is a word which pays me a hundred times

over for all that I have done or can ever do for your Majesty."

"Very well! it is my purpose to prove to you, Benvenuto, that it was no empty, meaningless word that escaped me, and that I called you my friend because you are my friend in fact. Bring me my Jupiter completed as soon as possible, and whatever you may ask of me when you bring it, upon my honor as a gentleman, you shall have if a king's hand can procure it for you. Do you hear, messieurs? If I forget my promise, remind me of it."

"Sire," cried Benvenuto, "you are a great and a noble king, and I am ashamed that I am able to do so little for you, who do so much for me."

Having kissed the hand the king held out to him, Cellini replaced the statue of Jupiter under his cloak, and left the council chamber with his heart overflowing with pride and joy.

As he left the Louvre, he met Primaticcio about to go in.

"Whither go you so joyously, my dear Benvenuto?" he said, as Cellini hastened along without seeing him.

"Ah! Francesco, is it you?" cried Cellini. "Yes, you are quite right. I am joyous indeed, for I have just seen our great, our sublime, our divine François I. —"

"And did you see Madame d'Etampes?" queried Primaticcio.

"Who said things to me, Francesco, that I dare not repeat, although they say that modesty is not my strong point."

"But what did Madame d'Etampes say to you?"

"He called me his friend, Francesco, do you understand? He talked to me as familiarly as he talks to his marshals. Finally, he said that when my Jupiter is

finished I may ask whatever favor I choose, and it is accorded in advance."

"But what did Madame d'Etampes promise you?"

"What a strange man you are, Francesco!"

"Why so?"

"You persist in talking about Madame d'Etampes when I speak of the king."

"Because I know the court better than you do, Benvenuto; because you are my countryman and my friend: because you have brought me a breath of air from our dear Italy, and in my gratitude I desire to save you from a great danger. Mark what I say, Benvenuto: the Duchesse d'Etampes is your enemy, your mortal enemy. I have told you this before, when I only feared it; I repeat it to-day, when I am perfectly sure of it. You have offended her, and if you do not appease her, Benvenuto, she will ruin you. Benvenuto, mark well what I say: Madame d'Etampes is the king's queen."

"Mon Dieu, what is all this?" cried Cellini, with a laugh. "I have offended Madame d'Etampes! how so, in God's name?"

"Oh, I know you, Benvenuto, and I supposed that you knew no more than I or the woman herself as to the cause of her aversion to you. But what can we do? Women are so constituted; they hate as they love, without knowing why, and the Duchesse d'Etampes hates you."

"What would you have me do?"

"What would I have you do! I would have the courtier rescue the sculptor."

"I, the courtier of a courtesan!"

"You are wrong, Benvenuto," said Primaticcio, smiling: "Madame d'Etampes is very beautiful, as every artist must admit."

"I admit it," said Benvenuto.

"Very well, go and say so to herself, and not to me. I ask nothing more than that to make you the best friends in the world. You have wounded her by some artist's whim, and it is your place to make the first advances toward her."

"If I wounded her," said Cellini, "I did it unintentionally, or rather without malice. She said some bitter words to me which I did not deserve; I put her back where she belonged, and she did deserve it."

"Never mind, never mind! forget what she said, Benvenuto, and make her forget your reply. I tell you again she is imperious and vindictive, and she has the king's heart in her hand, — a king who loves art, it is true, but who loves love more. She will make you repent your audacity, Benvenuto; she will make enemies for you; she it was who inspired the provost with courage to resist you. And listen: I am just setting out for Italy; I am going to Rome by her command; and my journey, Benvenuto, is aimed at you, — I, your friend, am compelled to become the instrument of her spleen."

"What are you to do at Rome?"

"What am I to do there? You have promised the king to emulate the ancients, and I know that you are a man to keep your promise. But the duchess thinks you a braggart, and with a view of crushing you by the comparison no doubt, she is sending me, a painter, to Rome to make casts of the most beautiful of the ancient statues, the Laocöon, the Venus, the Knife-Grinder, and God knows what!"

"That is, indeed, refinement of hatred," said Benvenuto, who, notwithstanding his good opinion of himself, was not altogether confident of the result of a comparison of his work with that of the great masters;

"but to yield to a woman," he added, clenching his fists, "never! never!"

"Who spoke of yielding? I will show you an excellent way to accomplish it. She is pleased with Ascanio; she wishes to employ him, and has instructed me to bid him call upon her. Now, nothing could be simpler than for you to accompany your pupil to the Hôtel d'Etampes and introduce him yourself to the fair duchess. Seize the opportunity; take with you one of those marvellous jewels which you alone can make, Benvenuto; show it to her first, and when you see her eyes glisten as she looks at it, offer it to her as an unworthy tribute to her beauty. She will accept, will thank you gracefully, and will in return make you some present worthy of you and take you back into favor. If, on the other hand, you have that woman for an enemy, abandon henceforth all the great things of which you are dreaming. Alas! I too have been compelled to stoop for a moment, only to rise to my full stature immediately. Until then that dauber Rosso was preferred to me; he was put forward everywhere, and always over my head. They made him Intendant of the Crown."

"You are unjust to him, Francesco," said Cellini, unable to conceal his real thought; "he is a great painter."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"And so am I sure of it," said Primaticcio, "and that is just why I hate him. They were using him to crush me; I flattered their wretched vanity, and now I am the great Primaticcio, and they are using me to crush you. Do as I did, therefore, Benvenuto; you will never repent having followed my advice. I implore you for your own sake and mine, I implore you in the name

of your renown and your future, both of which you will compromise if you persist in your obstinacy."

"It is hard," said Cellini, who was, however, perceptibly weakening in his determination.

"If not for yourself, Benvenuto, for the sake of our great king. Do you wish to tear his heart by compelling him to choose between a mistress he adores, and an artist he admires?"

"Very well! so be it! For the king's sake I will do it!" cried Cellini, overjoyed to find a pretext which would spare his self-esteem.

"*A la bonne heure!*" said Primaticcio. "You understand, of course, that if a single word of this conversation should be repeated to the duchess, it would cause my ruin."

"Oh! I trust that you have no fears on that score."

"If Benvenuto gives his word, all is said."

"You have it."

"In that case, adieu, brother."

"A pleasant journey to you."

"And good luck to you."

The two friends, having exchanged a cordial grasp of the hand, parted, each with a gesture which summarized their whole conversation.

XIII.

SOUVENT FEMME VARIE.

THE Hôtel d'Etampes was not far from the Hôtel de Nesle. Our readers will not be surprised therefore at our rapid flight from one to the other.

It was located near the Quai des Augustins, and extended the whole length of Rue Gilles-le-Gueux, which was at a later date sentimentally christened Rue Gît-le-Cœur. The principal entrance was upon Rue de l'Hirondelle. François I. had presented it to his mistress to induce her to become the wife of Jacques Desbrosses, Comte de Penthievre, as he had given the dukedom of Etampes and the government of Bretagne to Jacques Desbrosses, Comte de Penthievre, to induce him to marry his mistress.

The king had spared no pains to render his gift worthy of the lovely Anne d'Heilly. He had caused the old edifice to be refurbished and made over according to the latest style.

Upon its frowning façade the delicate flowers of the Renaissance sprang into life by magic, like so many thoughts of love. It was evident from the zeal displayed by the king in the decoration of this princely abode, that he anticipated passing almost as much of his time there as the duchess herself. The apartments were furnished with royal magnificence, and the whole establishment was upon the footing of that of a real queen,

much more extensive and luxurious, indeed, than that of the chaste and kindly Eleonora, sister of Charles V. and the lawful wife of François I., who was a personage of so little importance in the world, as well as at the French court.

If we are so indiscreet as to make our way into the duchess's sleeping apartment early in the morning, we shall find her half reclining upon a couch, her charming head supported by one of her lovely hands, and passing the other carelessly through her chestnut locks, which shone with a golden light. Her bare feet seem even smaller and whiter than they really are in her wide black velvet slippers, and her floating, *négligée* morning gown lends an irresistible charm to the coquette's fascinations.

The king is in the room, standing by a window, but he is not looking at his duchess. He is tapping his fingers rhythmically against the glass, and seems to be deep in meditation. He is thinking, no doubt, of the momentous question of Charles V.'s journey through France.

"Pray what are you doing there, Sire, with your back turned?" the duchess finally asks, petulantly.

"Making verses for you, my love, and they are finished at last, I believe."

"Oh, repeat them to me quickly, I pray you, my gallant crowned poet!"

"That I will," the king replies, with the confidence of a laurel-crowned rhymist. "Listen:—

'Etant seul et auprès d'une fenêtre,
Par un matin comme le jour peignait,
Je regardais Aurore à main senestre,
Qui à Phœbus le chemin enseignait,
Et d'autre part ma mie qui peignait
Son chef doré, et vis ses luisans yeux,

Dont un jeta un trait si gracieux,
Qu'à haute voix je fus contraint de dire ;
Dieux immortels ! rentrez dedans vos cieux,
Car la beauté de ceste vous empire !' " ¹

"Oh, the lovely verses!" says the duchess, clapping her hands. "Look at Aurora to your heart's content: henceforth I'll not be jealous of her, since to her I owe such charming verses. Say them to me once again, I beg."

François obligingly repeated his flattering lines, for his own benefit as well as hers, but this time Anne said nothing.

"What is the matter, my fair siren?" said François, who expected a second compliment.

"The matter is, Sire, that I am considering whether I will say to you again even more emphatically what I said last evening: a poet has even less pretext than a knightly king for allowing his mistress to be insulted, for she is at the same time his mistress and his Muse."

"Again, naughty one!" rejoined the king with an impatient gesture: "an insult indeed, bon Dieu! Your wrath is implacable, in good sooth, my nymph of nymphs, when it leads you to neglect my verses."

"Monseigneur, I hate as warmly as I love."

¹ Standing alone beside my window,
One morning as the day was breaking,
I saw at my left hand Aurora
To Phœbus pointing out his daily road ;
And on the other hand my sweetheart combing
Her golden locks ; I saw her beaming eyes
That shone so lovingly upon me,
That I was fain to cry aloud :
"Immortal Gods ! return to your abodes celestial,
Her loveliness doth put yours to the blush."

"And yet suppose I were to beg you to lay aside your animosity to Benvenuto, — a great fool, who knows not what he says, who talks just as he fights, heedless of consequences, and who had not, I swear, the slightest purpose to wound you. You know, moreover, that clemency's the attribute of goddesses, dear goddess mine, so pray forgive the simpleton for love of me!"

"Simpleton, indeed!" muttered Anne.

"Oh, a sublime simpleton, I grant you!" said François: "I saw him yesterday, and he promised to do marvellous things. He is a man, I verily believe, who has no rival in his art, and will hereafter shed as much lustre on my reign as Andrea del Sarto, Titian, and Leonardo da Vinci. You know how I love my artists, dearest duchess, so be complaisant and indulgent to him, I beg you. Mon Dieu! an April shower, a woman's caprice, and an artist's whim have more of fascination than of ennui for me. Come, come, do you, whom I do love so dearly, pardon at my bidding."

"I am your servant, Sire, and I will obey you."

"Thanks. In return for this favor accorded by the woman's kindly heart, you may demand such gift as pleases you that lies within the prince's power to bestow. But, alas! 't is growing late, and I must leave you. The council meets again to-day. 'T is an insufferable bore! Ah! my good brother Charles makes the king's trade most irksome to me. With him cunning replaces chivalry, the pen the sword; and 't is a burning shame. Upon my soul, I think we need new words to be devised for all this science and erudition of government. Adieu! my poor beloved. I will do my best to be adroit and clever. You are very fortunate, my dear, for you have only to remain beautiful, and Heaven has made that an easy task for you. Adieu! nay, do not rise, my page is

waiting for me in the antechamber. *Au revoir*, and think of me."

"As always, Sire."

François waved a last farewell to her with his hand, raised the hangings, and went out, leaving the fair duchess alone; and she, true to her promise, began at once, if we must say it, to think of other things.

Madame d'Etampes was of an impulsive, active, ambitious nature. Having eagerly sought and gallantly won the king's love, it was not long before that love ceased to satisfy her restless spirit, and she began to suffer from ennui. Neither Admiral Biron, nor the Comte de Longueval, whom she loved for some time, nor Diane de Poitiers, whom she always hated, furnished a sufficient amount of excitement for her needs; but within a week the void in her heart had been measurably filled, and she had begun to live again, thanks to a new hate and a new love. She hated Cellini and loved Ascanio, and she was thinking of one or the other while her women were completing her toilet.

When she was fully dressed except as to her headgear, the Provost of Paris and the Vicomte de Marmagne were announced.

They were among the most devoted partisans of the duchess in the warfare which existed at court between the Dauphin's mistress, Diane de Poitiers, and herself. One is naturally glad to see one's friends when thinking of one's enemies, and the manner of Madame d'Etampes was infinitely gracious as she gave the scowling provost and the smiling viscount her hand to kiss.

"Messire le Prévôt," she began, in a tone in which unfeigned wrath was blended with compassion that contained no suggestion of offence, "we have been informed of the infamous treatment you have received from this

Italian clown,—you, our best friend,—and we are extremely indignant.”

“Madame,” replied D’Estourville, neatly turning his misfortune into an occasion for flattery, “I should have been ashamed if one of my years and character had been spared by the villain who was not deterred by your beauty and charm.”

“Oh!” said Anne, “I think only of you; as to the insult to me personally, the king, who is really too indulgent to these insolent foreigners, has begged me to forget it, and I have done so.”

“In that case, madame, the request we have to make will doubtless be but ill received, and we ask your permission to withdraw without stating it.”

“What, Messire d’Estourville! am I not at your service at all times, and whatever may happen? Speak! speak! or I shall lose my temper with so distrustful a friend.”

“Very well, madame, this is what we have to say. I had believed that I might dispose of this grant of lodgings which I owe to your munificence in favor of the Vicomte de Marmagne, and naturally we cast our eyes upon the Hôtel de Nesle, which has fallen into such bad hands.”

“Aha!” said the duchess. “You interest me immensely.”

“The viscount, madame, accepted my suggestion in the first place with the utmost enthusiasm; but now, upon reflection, he hesitates, and thinks with terror of the redoubtable Benvenuto.”

“Pardon me, my good friend,” the viscount interposed, —“pardon me, you explain the matter very ill. I am not afraid of Benvenuto, but of the anger of the king. I have no fear of being killed by the Italian clown, to

use madame's words,—no, no! What I fear, so to speak, is that I may kill him, and that some ill may come to me for having deprived our lord and master of a servitor by whom he seems to set great store."

"I ventured to hope, madame, that, in case of need, your protection would not fail him."

"It has never yet failed my friends," said the duchess; "and, furthermore, have you not on your side a better friend than I,—justice? Are you not acting in accordance with the king's will?"

"His Majesty," Marmagne replied, "did not himself designate the Hôtel de Nesle as the abode of any other than Benvenuto, and our choice, under those circumstances, would seem very much like revenge,—there's no denying it. And then, suppose that I kill this Cellini, as I can promise to do, for I shall have two sure men with me?"

"Oh! mon Dieu!" exclaimed the duchess, showing her white teeth as she smiled, "the king's protection extends to living men, but I fancy that he takes but little thought to avenge the dead, and when his admiration for art is deprived of this particular subject, he will remember naught save his affection for me, I trust. The man insulted me publicly and outrageously, Marmagne! do you forget it?"

"But, madame," rejoined the prudent viscount, "be very sure that you know all you will have to defend."

"Oh, you are perfectly clear, viscount."

"Nay, madame, if you will permit me, I do not wish to leave you in ignorance upon any point. It may be that force will fail to effect our purpose with this devil of a man. In that event, we shall have recourse to stratagem; if he escapes my bravos in his Hôtel in broad daylight, they will meet him again some night by

accident in a lonely street, and — they have daggers, madame, as well as swords.”

“I understand,” said the duchess, nor did she turn a shade paler while listening to this little scheme of assassination.

“Well, madame?”

“Well, viscount, I see that you are a man of precautions, and that it’s not well to be numbered among your enemies, deuce take me!”

“But touching the affair itself, madame?”

“’Tis serious, in very truth, and is perhaps worth reflecting upon; but what was I saying? Every one knows, the king himself included, that this man has wounded me grievously in my pride. I hate him as bitterly as I hate my husband or Madame Diane, and i’ faith I think that I can promise you — What is it, Isabeau? why do you interrupt us?”

The duchess’s last words were addressed to one of her women, who entered hurriedly in a state of intense excitement.

“Mon Dieu! madame,” said she, “I ask madame’s pardon, but the Florentine artist, Benvenuto Cellini, is below with the loveliest little golden vase you can imagine. He said very courteously that he has come to present it to your ladyship, and he requests the favor of speaking with you a moment.”

“Aha!” exclaimed the duchess, with an expression of gratified pride; “what reply did you make to him, Isabeau?”

“That madame was not dressed, and that I would go and inform her of his presence.”

“Very good. It would seem,” the duchess added, turning to the dismayed provost, “that our enemy sees the error of his ways, and begins to realize who we are,

and what we can do. All the same, he will not come off so cheaply as he thinks, and I don't propose to accept his excuses all in a moment. He must be made to feel the enormity of his offence and the weight of our indignation a little more sensibly. Say to him, Isabeau, that you have informed me, and that I bid him wait."

Isabeau went out.

"I was saying, Vicomte de Marmagne," resumed the duchess, with a perceptible softening in her tone, "that what you were speaking of is a very serious matter, and that I could hardly promise to give my countenance to what is, after all, nothing less than ambuscade and murder."

"But the insult was so pronounced!" the provost ventured to say.

"The reparation will be no less so, I trust, messire. This famous pride, which has resisted the will of sovereigns, is yonder in my antechamber awaiting the good pleasure of a woman, and two hours of this purgatory will, in all conscience, sufficiently atone for an impertinent word. We must not be altogether pitiless, provost. Forgive him, as I shall forgive him two hours hence. Ought my influence over you to be less than the king's over me?"

"Kindly permit us to take leave now, madame," said the provost, bowing, "for I prefer not to make a promise to my real sovereign which I could not keep."

"Take your leave! oh no!" said the duchess, who was determined to have witnesses of her triumph. "I intend, Messire le Prévôt, that you shall be present at the humiliation of your enemy, and thus we shall both be avenged by the same stroke. I devote the next two hours to you and the viscount; nay, do not thank me. They say that you are marrying your daughter to Comte

d'Orbec, I believe? — a beautiful *parti*, in sooth. Fine, I should have said, not beautiful.¹ Pray, sit you down, messire! Do you know that my consent is needful for this marriage, and you've not asked it yet, but I will give it you. D'Orbec is as devoted to me as yourself. I hope that we are at last to see your lovely child, and have her for our own, and that her husband will not be so ill advised as not to bring her to court. What is her name, messire?"

"Colombe, madame."

"A sweet, pretty name. 'Tis said that one's name has an influence upon one's destiny: if it be so, the poor child should have a tender heart, and be foredoomed to suffer. Well, Isabeau, what is it now?"

"Nothing, madame; he said that he would wait."

"Ah, yes! 'tis well. I had forgotten him already. Yes, yes, messire, I say again, keep your eye on Colombe; the count's a husband of the same sort as mine, as ambitious as the Duc d'Etampes is avaricious, and quite capable of exchanging his wife for some duchy. And then you must be beware of me as well, especially if she's as pretty as she's said to be! You will present her to me, will you not, messire? 'T will be no more than fair, so that I may be prepared to defend myself."

The duchess, exultant in anticipation of her triumph, ran on thus for a long while with apparent unconcern, although her impatient joy could be discerned in her every movement.

"Well, well," she said at last, "another half-hour and the two hours will have passed; then we will release poor Benvenuto from his agony. Put yourselves in his place; he must suffer terribly, for he is little wonted to

¹ "Je dis *beau*, c'est *bon* que je devrais dire."

this sort of sentry-go. To him the Louvre is always open, and the king always visible. In truth, I pity him, although he well deserves it. He must be gnashing his teeth, must he not? And then to be unable to give vent to his anger. Ha! ha! ha! I shall have many a hearty laugh over this. But what is that I hear? Bon Dieu! all that shouting and uproar!"

"May it not be that the soul of the damned is wearying of Purgatory?" suggested the provost, with renewed hope.

"I propose to go and see," said the duchess, turning pale. "Come with me, my masters, come."

Benvenuto, persuaded by the arguments we have heard to make his peace with the all-powerful favorite, on the day following his conversation with Primaticcio took the little golden vase as a peace-offering, and repaired to the Hôtel d'Etampes, with Ascanio leaning on his arm, still very weak and very pale after a night of suffering. In the first place, the footmen refused to announce him at so early an hour, and he lost a good half-hour parleying with them. He had already begun to lose his temper, when Isabeau at last made her appearance, and consented to announce him to her mistress. She returned to say to Benvenuto that the duchess was dressing, and he must wait a short time. He took patience, therefore, and sat himself down upon a stool beside Ascanio, who was considerably overdone by the walk, in conjunction with his fever and his painful thoughts.

An hour passed. Benvenuto began to count the minutes. "After all," he thought, "the toilette of a duchess is the most important function of the day, and I don't propose to lose the benefit of the step I have taken for a quarter of an hour more or less."

Nevertheless, in the face of this philosophical reflection, he began to count the seconds.

Meanwhile Ascanio turned paler and paler; he was determined to say nothing to his master of his sufferings, and had accompanied him without a word; but he had eaten nothing that morning, and, although he refused to acknowledge it, he felt that his strength was failing him.

Benvenuto could not remain seated, but began to stalk up and down the room.

A quarter of an hour passed.

"Are you suffering, my child?" he asked.

"No, master, indeed I'm not: you are the one who is suffering. Be patient, I beg you, for she cannot be long now."

At that moment Isabeau appeared again.

"Your mistress is very slow," said Benvenuto.

The mischievous girl went to the window, and looked at the clock in the courtyard.

"Why, you have waited only an hour and a half," she said; "why do you complain, pray?"

As Cellini frowned, she laughed in his face, and tripped away.

Benvenuto, by a violent effort, subdued his wrath once more. But in order to do it he was obliged to resume his seat, and sat with folded arms, silent and stern. He seemed calm; but his wrath was fermenting silently. Two servants stood like statues at the door, observing him with a serious expression, which seemed to him derisory.

The clock struck the quarter. Benvenuto glanced at Ascanio, and saw that he was paler than ever, and almost ready to faint.

"Ah ça!" he cried, throwing his self-restraint to the

winds, "so this is done designedly ! I chose to believe what I was told, and wait good-naturedly : but if an insult is intended — and I am so little wonted to them, that the thought did not occur to me — if an insult is intended, I am not the man to allow myself to be insulted, even by a woman, and I go. Come, Ascanio."

As he spoke, Benvenuto, raising in his powerful hand the unhospitable stool, on which the duchess in her wrath had humiliated him for two mortal hours without his knowledge, let it fall to the floor and shattered it. The valets made a movement toward him, but he half drew his dagger and they stopped. Ascanio, terrified for his master, essayed to rise, but his excitement had exhausted what remained of his strength, and he fell to the floor unconscious. Benvenuto at first did not see him.

At that moment the duchess appeared in the doorway, pale and trembling with wrath.

"Yes, I go," Benvenuto repeated in a voice of thunder, perfectly well aware of her presence, but addressing the valets : "do you tell the woman that I take my present with me to give to somebody, I know not whom, who'll be more worthy of it than herself. Tell her that, if she took me for one of her valets, like yourselves, she made a sad mistake, and that we artists do not sell our loyalty and homage as she sells her love ! And now make way for me ! Follow me, Ascanio !"

As he spoke, he turned toward his beloved pupil, and saw that his eyes were closed, and that his head had fallen back against the wall.

"Ascanio !" he cried, "Ascanio, my child, fainting, perhaps dying ! O Ascanio, my beloved ! and 't is this woman again — " And Benvenuto turned with a threatening gesture to Madame d'Etampes, at the same time starting to carry Ascanio away in his arms.

The duchess meanwhile, transfixed with rage and terror, had not moved or spoken. But when she saw Ascanio with his head thrown back, and his long hair dishevelled, as white as marble, and so beautiful in his pallor, she rushed to him in obedience to an irresistible impulse, and fell on her knees opposite Benvenuto, seizing one of Ascanio's hands in her own.

"Why, the child is dying! If you take him away, monsieur, you will kill him. He may need immediate attention. Jerome, run and fetch Master André. I do not mean that he shall go from here in this condition, do you understand? You may go or stay, as you please, but leave him."

Benvenuto cast a penetrating glance at the duchess, and one of deep anxiety at Ascanio. He realized that there could be no danger in leaving his cherished pupil in the care of Madame d'Etampes, while there might be very serious danger in removing him without proper precaution. His mind was soon made up, as always, for swift and inexorable decision was one of Cellini's most striking good or bad qualities.

"You will answer for him, madame?" he said.

"Oh, with my life!" cried the duchess.

He softly kissed his apprentice on the forehead, and, wrapping his cloak about him, stalked proudly from the room, with his hand upon his dagger, not without exchanging a glance of hatred and disdain with the duchess. As for the two men, he did not deign to look at them.

Anne followed her enemy so long as she could see him with eyes blazing with wrath; then, with an entire change of expression, her eyes rested sadly and anxiously upon the comely invalid; love took the place of anger, the tigress became a gazelle once more.

"Master André," she said to her physician, who entered hurriedly, "save him ; he is wounded and dying."

"It is nothing," said Master André, "a mere passing weakness."

He poured upon Ascanio's lips a few drops of a cordial which he always carried about him.

"He is coming to himself," cried the duchess, "he moved. Now, master, he must be kept quiet, must he not? Take him into yonder room," she said to the valets, "and lay him upon a couch.— But, hark ye," she added, lowering her voice, so that none but they could hear: "if one word escapes you as to what you have seen and heard, your neck shall pay for your tongue. Go."

The trembling lackeys bowed, and, gently lifting Ascanio, bore him away.

Remaining alone with the provost and the Viscomte de Marmagne, prudent and passive spectators of the outrage upon her, Madame d'Etampes eyed them both, especially the latter, with a scornful glance, but she speedily repressed the inclination to express her contempt in words.

"I was saying, viscount," she began in a bitter tone, but calmly, "I was saying that the thing you proposed was very serious; but I did not reflect sufficiently upon it. I have sufficient power, I think, to permit me to strike down a traitor, even as I should have sufficient, if need were, to deal with indiscreet friends. The king would condescend to punish him this time, I trust; but I choose to avenge myself. Punishment would make the insult public; vengeance will bury it. You have been cool and clever enough, messieurs, to postpone my vengeance, in order not to compromise its success, and I

congratulate you upon it. Be shrewd enough now, I conjure you, not to let it escape you, and do not compel me to have recourse to others than yourselves. Viscomte de Marmagne, it is necessary to speak plainly to you. I guarantee you equal impunity with the executioner; but if you care for my advice, I advise you and your sbirri to lay aside the sword, and trust to the dagger. Say nothing, but act, and that promptly; that is the most satisfactory response. Adieu, messieurs."

With these words, uttered in a short, abrupt tone, the duchess extended her hand as if to point out the door to the two noblemen. They bowed awkwardly, too confused to find words in which to frame an excuse, and left the room.

"Oh, to think that I am only a woman, and am obliged to resort to such dastards!" exclaimed Anne, looking after them while her lips curled disdainfully. "Oh how I despise them all, royal lover, venal husband, valet in silken doublet, valet in livery, — all save a single one whom in my own despite I admire, and another whom I delight to love!"

She entered the room to which the interesting invalid had been carried. As she approached the couch Ascanio opened his eyes.

"It was nothing," said Master André to the duchess. "The young man has received a wound in the shoulder, and fatigue, some mental shock, or hunger, it may be, caused a momentary faintness, from which he has completely recovered, as you see, by the use of cordials. He is fully restored now, and may safely be taken home in a litter."

"Very good," said the duchess, handing a purse to Master André, who bowed low and went out.

"Where am I?" said Ascanio, seeking to collect his thoughts.

"You are with me, at my home, Ascanio," the duchess replied.

"At your home, madame? Ah! yes, I recognize you; you are Madame d'Etampes. And I remember too — Where is Benvenuto? Where is my master?"

"Do not stir, Ascanio; your master is safe, never fear. He is dining peaceably at home at the present moment."

"But how does it happen that he left me here?"

"You lost consciousness, and he trusted you to my care."

"And you assure me, madame, that he is in no danger; that he went from here unharmed?"

"I tell you again, I promise you, Ascanio, that he has never been less exposed to danger than at this moment. Ungrateful boy, when I, Duchesse d'Etampes, am watching over him and caring for him with the tender solicitude of a sister, to persist in speaking of his master!"

"O madame, I pray you pardon me, and accept my thanks!" said Ascanio.

"Indeed, it's high time!" rejoined the duchess, shaking her pretty head with a sly smile.

Thereupon she began to speak, giving to every word a tender intonation, and to the simplest phrases the subtlest of meanings, asking every question greedily and at the same time with respect, and listening to every reply as if her destiny depended upon it. She was humble, soft and caressing as a cat, quick to grasp every cue, like a consummate actress, leading Ascanio gently back to the subject if he wandered from it, and giving him all the credit for ideas which she evolved and cunningly led up to; seeming to distrust herself, and listening to him as if he were an oracle; exerting to the utmost the cultivated, charming intellect which, as we have said, caused

her to be called the loveliest of blue-stockings and the most learned of beauties. In short, this interview became in her hands the most cajoling flattery, and the cleverest of seductions. As the youth for the third or fourth time made ready to take his leave, she said, still detaining him:—

“You speak, Ascanio, with so much eloquence and fire of your goldsmith’s art, that it is a perfect revelation to me, and henceforth I shall see the conception of a master where I have hitherto seen only an ornament. In your opinion Benvenuto is the great master of the art?”

“Madame, he has surpassed the divine Michel-Angelo himself.”

“I am pleased to hear it. You lessen the ill-will I bear him on account of his rude behavior to me.

“Oh! you must not mind his roughness, madame. His brusque manner conceals a most ardent and devoted heart; but Benvenuto is at the same time the most impatient and fiery of men. He thought that you were making him wait in mere sport, and the insult—”

“Say the mischief,” rejoined the duchess with the simulated confusion of a spoiled child. “It is the truth that I was not dressed when your master arrived, and I simply prolonged my toilet a little. It was wrong, very wrong. You see that I confess my sins to you freely. I knew not that you were with him,” she added eagerly.

“True, madame, but Cellini, who is not very sagacious, I admit, and whose confidence has been sadly abused, deems you to be—I may say it to you who are so gracious and kind—very wicked and very terrible, and he thought that he detected an insult in what was nothing more than child’s play.”

“Do you think so?” queried the duchess, unable wholly to repress a mocking smile.

"Oh, forgive him, madame! he is noble-hearted and generous, and if he knew you as you are, believe me, he would ask your pardon for his error on his knees."

"Say no more, I pray you! Do you think to make me love him now? I bear him a grudge, I tell you, and, to begin with, I propose to raise up a rival."

"That will be difficult, madame."

"No, Ascanio, for you, his pupil, shall be the rival. Allow me, at least, if I must do homage to this great genius who detests me, to do it indirectly. Say, will you, of whose charming inventive talent Cellini himself boasts, refuse to place your talent at my service? And since you do not share your master's prejudices against my person, will you not prove it to me by consenting to assist in embellishing it?"

"Madame, all that I am and all the power I have is at your service. You are so kind to me, you have inquired with so much interest concerning my past and my hopes for the future, that I am henceforth devoted to you heart and soul."

"Child, I have done nothing yet, and I ask nothing from you at present except a little of your talent. Tell me, have you not seen some jewel of surpassing beauty in your dreams? I have superb pearls; into what marvellous creation would you like to transform them, my pretty wizard? Shall I confide to you an idea of my own? A moment since, as you lay in yonder room with pale cheeks and head thrown back, I fancied that I saw a beautiful lily whose stalk was bending in the wind. Make me a lily of pearls and silver to wear in my corsage," said the enchantress, placing her hand upon her heart.

"Ah! madame, such kindness —"

"Ascanio, do you care to repay my kindness, as you

call it? Promise me that you will take me for your confidante, your friend, that you will hide nothing from me of your acts, your plans, your sorrows, for I see that you are unhappy. Promise to come to me when you stand in need of help or counsel."

"Why, madame, you bestow one favor more upon me, rather than ask a proof of my gratitude."

"However that may be, you promise?"

"Alas! I would have given you the promise yesterday, madame; for yesterday I might have thought that I might some day need your help or counsel; but to-day it is in no one's power to help me."

"Who knows?"

"I know, madame."

"Ah me! Ascanio, you are unhappy, you are unhappy, you cannot deceive me."

Ascanio sadly shook his head.

"You are disingenuous with a friend, Ascanio; 't is not well done of you," the duchess continued, taking the young man's hand, and softly pressing it.

"My master must be anxious, madame, and I am afraid that my presence discommodes you. I feel quite well again. Allow me to withdraw."

"How eager you are to leave me! Wait at least until a litter is prepared for you. Do not resist; it is the doctor's order, and my own."

Anne called a servant, and gave him the necessary orders, then bade Isabeau bring her pearls and some of her jewels, which she handed to Ascanio.

"Now I restore your freedom," she said; "but when you are fully restored to health, my lily will be the first thing you give your mind to, will it not? Meanwhile, think upon it, I beg you, and as soon as you have finished your design come and show it to me."

"Yes, Madame la Duchesse."

"And do you not wish me to think upon how I can be of service to you, and to do whatever you wish, since you are doing for me what I wish? Come, Ascanio, come, my child, and tell me what you sigh for? For at your age one seeks in vain to still the beating of his heart, turn his eyes away, and close his lips,—one always sighs for something. Do you deem me to be so devoid of power and influence that you disdain to make me your confidante?"

"I know, madame," rejoined Ascanio, "that you enjoy all the power which you deserve. But no human power will avail to help me in my present plight."

"Tell me all the same," said the duchess; "I insist!" Then, with fascinating coquetry, softening her voice and her expression, she added, "I beseech you!"

"Alas! alas! madame," cried Ascanio, as his grief overflowed. "Alas! since you speak so kindly to me, and since my departure will cover my shame and tears, I will do, not as I should have done yesterday, address a prayer to the duchess, but make a confidante of the woman. Yesterday I would have said, 'I love Colombe, and I am happy!' To-day I will say, 'Colombe does not love me, and there is nothing left for me to do but to die!' Adieu, madame, and pity me!"

Ascanio hurriedly kissed Madame d'Etampes's hand, as she stood mute and motionless, and vanished.

"A rival! a rival!" said Anne, as if awaking from a dream; "but she does not love him, and he shall love me, for I will have it so! Oh yes! I swear that he shall love me, and that I will kill Benvenuto!"

XIV.

WHEREIN IT IS PROVEN THAT SORROW IS THE
GROUNDWORK OF THE LIFE OF MAN.

WE ask pardon for the bitter misanthropy of this title. It is the fact that the present chapter will exhibit scarcely any other coherent principle than sorrow, and therein will resemble life. The reflection is not new, as a celebrated character in comic opera would say, but it is consoling, in that it will perhaps be accepted as an apology by the reader, whom we are about to lead, even as Virgil led Dante, from despair to despair.

No offence is intended either to the reader or to Virgil.

Our friends, in very truth, at the moment at which we have now arrived, were all, beginning with Benvenuto and ending with Jacques Aubry, plunged in melancholy, and we are about to see them gradually engulfed in the dark rising tide of sorrow.

We left Benvenuto exceedingly anxious concerning Ascanio's condition. On his return to the Grand-Nesle, he thought but little of the wrath of Madame d'Etampes, I promise you. His sole preoccupation was his dear invalid. So it was that his joy knew no bounds when the door opened to give admission to a litter, and Ascanio, leaping lightly to the ground, grasped his hand, and assured him that he was no worse than in the morning. But Benvenuto's brow quickly grew dark at the apprentice's first words, and he listened with an expression of peculiar dissatisfaction while the younger man said:—

"Master, I propose to show you that you have done a wrong for which you must make amends, and I am sure that you will thank me instead of bearing me ill-will for it. You are mistaken with relation to Madame d'Etampes; she neither despises nor hates you; on the contrary, she honors and admires you, and you must agree that you were very rude in your treatment of her, — a woman and a duchess. Master, Madame d'Etampes is not only as beautiful as a goddess, she is as kind as an angel, modest and enthusiastic, simple-minded and noble, and at heart her disposition is lovely. What you deemed insulting insolence this morning was nothing more than childish mischief. I implore you, for your own sake — you surely would not be unjust — as well as for mine, whom she made welcome and cared for with such touching kindness, not to persist in your insulting contempt for her. I will answer for it that you will have no difficulty in persuading her — But you do not answer me, dear master. You shake your head. Can it be that I have wounded you?"

"Hark ye, my child," rejoined Benvenuto gravely. "I have often told you that in my view there is but one thing in the world forever beautiful, forever young, forever fruitful, and that is art divine. And yet, I think, I hope, I know, that in certain tender hearts love also counts for much, — a deep and noble sentiment, which may make happy a whole life; but it is very rare. For what is love in most cases? A fancy of a day, a joyous intimacy, in which both parties are deceived, and very often in the best of faith. I make sport of this love, as it is called, Ascanio, with great freedom as you know; I laugh at its high-flown pretensions and its stilted language. I do not slander it. To say truth, it rather pleases me; it has *in petto* all the joy, all

the sweetness, all the jealousy of a serious passion, but its wounds are not mortal. Comedy or tragedy, after a certain time one hardly remembers it save as a sort of theatrical performance. And then, Ascanio, while women are charming creatures, to my mind all save a very few do not deserve and do not understand anything more than this passing fancy. To give them more, one must be a dupe or an imprudent fool. Take Scozzone, for example: if she should enter my heart, she would be terrified at what she saw therein; I leave her at the threshold, and she sings and dances, she is light of heart and happy. Moreover, Ascanio, these ever changing alliances have a less durable basis, which however is all-sufficient for the artist, — the worship of form, and the adoration of pure beauty. That is their serious side, and it is on account of that that I say no ill of them, although I laugh at them. But, Ascanio, mark this: there are other passions which do not make me laugh, but make me tremble, — terrible, insensate passions, as impossible as things we see in dreams."

"Mon Dieu!" thought Ascanio, "can he have learned aught of my mad passion for Colombe?"

"They afford neither pleasure nor happiness," continued Cellini, "and yet they take possession of one's whole being; they are vampires which slowly drink your whole existence, which devour your heart little by little; they hold you in a deathly embrace, and you cannot extricate yourself. Ascanio, Ascanio, beware of such a passion. 'Tis clear that they are mere chimeras, and that they can in no way profit one, and yet men who know this well plunge into them body and soul, and abandon their lives to them almost with joy."

"He has that in his mind! he knows all!" said Ascanio to himself.

"My dear son," pursued Benvenuto, "if there still is time, break these bonds which would hold you fast forever; you will bear the mark of them, but try at least to save your life."

"Who told you that I love her, in God's name?" demanded the apprentice.

"If you do not love her, God be praised!" exclaimed Benvenuto, thinking that Ascanio denied the impeachment, when he simply asked a question. "Beware at all events, for I saw this morning that she loves you."

"This morning! Of whom are you speaking? What do you mean?"

"Of whom am I speaking? of Madame d'Etampes."

"Madame d'Etampes!" echoed the bewildered apprentice. "Why, master you are wrong, it's not possible. You say that you saw that Madame d'Etampes loves me?"

"Ascanio, I am forty years old; I have lived, and I know whereof I speak. By her manner of looking at you, by the favorable opinion which she has succeeded in leading you to form of her, I would dare swear that she loves you; and from the enthusiasm with which you defended her just now I was much afraid that you had fallen in love with her as well. In that case, dear Ascanio, you would be lost: her love, hot enough to consume your whole being, when it left you, would leave you with no illusion, no faith, no hope, and you would have no other resource but to love others as you had been loved yourself, and to carry to other hearts the havoc that had been wrought in your own."

"Master," said Ascanio, "I do not know whether Madame d'Etampes loves me, but I am perfectly sure that I do not love Madame d'Etampes."

Benvenuto was no more than half convinced by As-

canio's apparent sincerity, for he thought that he might be deceived as to his own feelings. He said nothing more on the subject, and in the days which followed often gazed at the apprentice with a sad face.

It should be said, however, that he did not seem to be troubled exclusively on Ascanio's account. He gave every indication of being tormented by some personal distress. He lost his frank, joyous manner, and no longer indulged in his original pranks of former days. He always secluded himself during the forenoon in his room over the foundry, and had given explicit orders that he should not be disturbed there. The rest of the day he worked at the gigantic statue of Mars with his accustomed ardor, but without talking about it with his accustomed effusiveness. Especially in Ascanio's presence did he seem gloomy, embarrassed, and almost shamefaced. He seemed to avoid his dear pupil as if he were his creditor or his judge. In short, it was easy to see that some great sorrow or some great passion had found its way into that manly heart, and was laying it waste.

Ascanio was hardly more happy; he was persuaded, as he had said to Madame d'Etampes, that Colombe did not love him. Comte d'Orbec, whom he knew only by name, was, in his jealous thoughts, a young and attractive nobleman, and Messire d'Estourville's daughter, the happy betrothed of a well favored, nobly born lover, had never for an instant thought of an obscure artist. Even if he had retained the vague and fleeting hope which never deserts a heart overflowing with love, he had himself destroyed his last chance if Madame d'Etampes was really in love with him, by disclosing to her the name of her rival. This proposed marriage, which she might perhaps have prevented, she would now do everything in

her power to hasten forward; and poor Colombe would feel the full force of her hatred. Yes, Benvenuto was right; that woman's love was in very truth a terrible and deadly thing; but Colombe's love would surely be the sublime, celestial sentiment of which the master had first spoken, and alas! that immeasurable blessing was destined for another!

Ascanio was in despair; he had believed in Madame d'Etampes's friendship, and now it seemed that this deceitful friendship was a dangerous passion; he had hoped for Colombe's love, and it seemed that her supposititious passion was nothing more than indifferent friendship. He felt that he almost hated both these women, who had so falsified his dreams in that each of them regarded him as he would have liked to be regarded by the other.

Entirely absorbed by a feeling of hopeless discouragement, he did not once think of the lily ordered by Madame d'Etampes, and in his jealous anger he would not repeat his visit to the Petit-Nesle, despite the entreaties and reproaches of Ruperta, whose innumerable questions he left unanswered. Sometimes, however, he repented of the resolution he made on the first day, which was assuredly cruel to none but himself. He longed to see Colombe, to demand an explanation. But of what? Of his own extravagant visions! However, he would see her, he would think in his softer moments; he would confess his love to her as a crime, and she was so tender-hearted that perhaps she would comfort him as if it were a misfortune. But how explain his absence, how excuse himself in the maiden's eyes?

Ascanio allowed the days to pass in innocent, sorrowful reflections, and did not dare to take any decided step.

Colombe awaited Ascanio's coming with mingled terror

and joy on the day following that on which Dame Perrine flooded the apprentice with her direful revelation; but in vain did she count the hours and the minutes, in vain did Dame Perrine keep her ears on the alert. Ascanio, who had recovered in good time from his swoon, and might have availed himself of Colombe's gracious permission, did not come, attended by Ruperta, and give the preconcerted signal at the door in the wall of the Petit-Nesle. What did it mean?

It meant that Ascanio was ill, dying perhaps, at all events too ill to come. At least that was what Colombe thought; she passed the whole evening kneeling at her prie-Dieu, weeping and praying, and when she ceased to pray she found that she continued to weep. That discovery terrified her. The anxiety which oppressed her heart was a revelation to her. Indeed, there was sufficient cause for alarm, for in less than a month Ascanio had taken possession of her thoughts to such a degree as to make her forget her God, her father, and her misery.

But there was room in her mind for nothing now but this: Ascanio was suffering within two steps of her; he would die before she could see him. It was no time to reason, but to weep and weep. If he should be saved, she would reflect.

The next day it was still worse. Perrine watched for Ruperta, and as soon as she saw her leave the house rushed out to go to market for news far more than for supplies. Now Ascanio was no longer seriously ill; he had simply refused to go to the Petit-Nesle, without replying to Dame Ruperta's eager questions otherwise than by obstinately keeping silent. The two gossips were reduced to conjectures: such a thing was entirely incomprehensible to them.

Colombe, however, did not seek long for the explanation; she said to herself at once: —

“He knows all: he has learned that in three months I shall be Comte d’Orbec’s wife, and he has no wish to see me again.”

Her first impulse was to be grateful to her lover for his anger, and to smile. Let him explain this secret joy who can; we are simply the historian. But soon, upon reflection, she took it ill of Ascanio that he was able to believe that she was not in despair at the thought of such a union.

“So he despises me,” she said to herself.

All these impulses, indignant or affectionate, were very dangerous: they laid bare the heart which before knew not itself. Colombe said to herself aloud, that she did not desire to see Ascanio; but she whispered, that she awaited his coming to justify herself. She suffered in her timorous conscience; she suffered in her misapprehended love.

It was not the only passion which Ascanio did not understand. There was another more powerful, more impatient to make itself known, and which dreamed darkly of happiness, as hatred dreams of vengeance.

Madame d’Etampes did not believe, did not choose to believe, in Ascanio’s profound passion for Colombe.

“A child who has no conception of what he really wants,” she said to herself, “who falls in love with the first pretty girl he sees, who has come in collision with the high and mighty airs of an empty-headed little fool, and whose pride takes offence at the least obstacle. Oh! when he realizes what true love is, ardent, clinging love, — when he knows that I, Duchesse d’Etampes, whose caprice rules a kingdom, love him! — Ah! but he must know it!”

The Vicomte de Marmagne and the Provost of Paris suffered in their hatred, as Anne and Colombe suffered in their love. They harbored mortal enmity to Benvenuto, — Marmagne especially. Benvenuto had caused him to be despised and humiliated by a woman; Benvenuto constrained him to be brave, for before the scene at the Hôtel d'Etampes the viscount might have had him poniarded by his people on the street, but now he must needs go and beard him in his own house, and Marmagne shuddered with dismay at the prospect. We do not readily pardon those who force us to realize that we are cowards.

Thus all were suffering, even Scozzone. Scozzone the madcap laughed and sang no more, and her eyes were often red with weeping. Benvenuto did not love her. Benvenuto was always cold, and sometimes spoke sharply to her.

Scozzone had for a long time had a fixed idea, which had become a monomania with her. She was determined to become Benvenuto's wife. When she first went to him, expecting to serve him as a plaything, and he treated her with all the consideration due a wife, and not as a mere light o' love, the poor child was greatly exalted by such unlooked for respect and honor, and at the same time she felt profoundly grateful to her benefactor, and unaffectedly proud to find herself so highly esteemed. Afterward, not at Benvenuto's command, but in response to his entreaty, she gladly consented to serve him as model, and by dint of seeing her own form and features so often reproduced, and so often admired, in bronze, in silver, and in gold, she had simply attributed half of the goldsmith's success to herself; for the lovely outlines, which were so loudly praised, belonged to her much more than to the master. She blushed with

pleasure when Benvenuto was complimented upon the purity of the lines of this or that figure; she complacently persuaded herself that she was indispensable to her lover's renown, and had become a part of his glory, even as she had become a part of his heart.

Poor child! she did not dream that she had never been to the artist that secret inspiration, that hidden divinity, which every creator evokes, and which makes him a creator. Because Benvenuto copied her graceful attitudes, she believed in good faith that he owed everything to her, and little by little she took courage to hope that, after raising the courtesan to the rank of mistress, he would raise the mistress to the rank of wife.

As dissimulation was altogether foreign to her character, she had avowed her ambition in very precise terms. Cellini listened to her gravely, and replied,—

“This requires consideration.”

The fact was that he would have preferred to return to the Castle of San Angelo at the risk of breaking his leg a second time in making his escape. Not that he despised his dear Scozzone; he loved her dearly, and sometimes a little jealously, as we have seen, but he adored art before everything, and his true and lawful wife was sculpture first of all. Furthermore, when he should be married, would not the husband depress the spirits of the gay Bohemian? Would not the *pater-familias* interfere with the freedom of the sculptor? And, again, if he must marry all his models, he would commit bigamy a hundred times over.

“When I cease to love Scozzone, and to need her as a model,” he said to himself, “I will find some worthy fellow for her, too short-sighted to look back into the past and to divine the future, who will see nothing but a lovely woman and the marriage portion I will give her.

Thus I will satisfy her mania for wearing the name of wife, bourgeois fashion." For Benvenuto was convinced that Scozzone's desire was simply to have a husband, and that it mattered little to her who the husband might be.

Meanwhile, he left the ambitious damsel to take what comfort she could in her fancies. But since their installation at the Grand-Nesle, her eyes had been opened, and she realized that she was not so necessary to Cellini's life and work as she thought, for she could no longer with her gayety dispel the cloud of melancholy which overhung his brow, and he had begun to model a Hebe in wax for which she was not asked to pose. At last, the poor child — *horribile dictu!* — had essayed to play the coquette with Ascanio in Cellini's presence, and there had been not the slightest drawing together of the eyebrows to bear witness to the master's jealous wrath. Must she then bid farewell to all her blissful dreams, and become once more a poor, humiliated creature?

As to Pagolo, if any one cares to sound the depths of his heart, we venture to say that he had never been more gloomy and taciturn than of late.

It may be imagined that the hilarious student, Jacques Aubry, had escaped this contagious depression of spirits. Not at all; he had his own cause for repining. Simonne, after waiting a long while for him on the Sunday of the siege of Nesle, returned to the conjugal mansion in a rage, and had since stubbornly refused to meet the impertinent embryo lawyer upon any pretext whatsoever. He, in revenge, had withdrawn his custom from his capricious charmer's husband, but that disgusting tradesman evinced at the news no other sentiment than the keenest satisfaction; for although Jacques Aubry wore out his clothes quickly and recklessly — always excepting the pockets — we must add that his guiding economical maxim was never

to pay for them. When Simonne's influence was no longer exerted as a counterpoise to the absence of money, the selfish tailor concluded that the honor of dressing Jacques Aubry did not compensate him for the loss he suffered by dressing him for nothing.

Thus our poor friend found himself at one and the same time bereft of his love and cut short in his supply of clothing. Luckily, as we have seen, he was not the man to wither away in melancholy. He soon fell in with a charming little consolation named Gervaise. But Gervaise was bristling all over with principles of all sorts, which to his mind were most absurd. She eluded him again and again, and he wore his heart out in devising means to bring the flirt to her senses. He almost lost the power to eat and drink, especially as his infamous landlord, who was own cousin to his infamous tailor, refused to give him credit.

Thus all whose names have figured prominently in these pages were sorely ill at ease, — from the king, who was very anxious to know whether Charles V. would or would not conclude to pass through France, to Dame Perrine and Dame Ruperta, who were much put out at their inability to continue their gossip. If our readers, like Jupiter of old, had the wearisome privilege of listening to all the complaints and all the wishes of mankind, they would hear a plaintive chorus something like this: —

Jacques Aubry: "If Gervaise would only cease to laugh in my face!"

Scozzone: "If Benvenuto would only have one pang of jealousy!"

Pagolo: "If Scozzone could only bring herself to detest the master!"

Marmagne: "If I might have the good fortune to surprise Cellini alone!"

Madame d'Etampes : " If Ascanio only knew how I love him ! "

Colombe : " If I could see him for one moment, — long enough to justify myself ! "

Ascanio : " If she would only explain ! "

Benvenuto : " If I dared confess my agony to Ascanio ! "

All : " Alas ! alas ! alas ! "

XV.

WHEREIN IT APPEARS THAT JOY IS NOTHING MORE
THAN SORROW IN ANOTHER FORM.

ALL these longings were to be gratified before the end of the week. But their gratification was destined to leave those who had formed them more unhappy and more melancholy than ever. Such is the universal law ; every joy contains the germ of sorrow.

In the first place Gervaise ceased to laugh in Jacques Aubry's face ; a change most ardently desired by the student, as the reader will remember. Jacques Aubry had discovered the golden fetters which were to bind the damsel to his chariot. They consisted in a lovely ring carved by Benvenuto himself, and representing two clasped hands.

It should be said that, since the day of the siege, Jacques Aubry had conceived a warm friendship for the outspoken and energetic nature of the Florentine artist. He did not interrupt him when he was speaking, — an unheard of thing ! He kept his eyes fixed upon him and listened to him with respect, which was more than he had ever consented to do for his professors. He admired his work with an enthusiasm which, if not very enlightened, was at least very warm and sincere. On the other hand, his loyalty, his courage, and his jovial disposition attracted Cellini. He was just strong enough at tennis to make a good fight, but to lose in the end. He

was his match at table, within a bottle. In short he and the goldsmith had become the best friends in the world, and Cellini, generous because his wealth was inexhaustible, had one day forced him to accept this little ring, which was carved with such marvellous skill that, in default of the apple, it would have tempted Eve, and sown discord between Peleus and Thetis.

On the morrow of the day when the ring passed from Jacques Aubry's hands to those of Gervaise, Gervaise resumed a serious demeanor, and the student hoped that she was his. Poor fool ! on the contrary, he was hers.

Scozzone succeeded, as she desired, in kindling a spark of jealousy in Benvenuto's heart. This is how it came about.

One evening, when her wiles and coquetries had as usual failed to arouse the master from his imperturbable gravity, she assumed a solemn expression herself.

"Benvenuto," said she, "it seems to me, do you know, as if you had forgotten your promise to me."

"What promise is that, my dear child ?" rejoined Benvenuto, apparently seeking an explanation of her reproach from the ceiling.

"Have n't you promised a hundred times to marry me ?"

"I don't remember it."

"You don't remember it ?"

"No ; I should say that my only reply was, 'This requires consideration.'"

"Well ! have you considered it ?"

"Yes."

"With what result ?"

"That I am still too young to be anything else than your lover, Scozzone. We will speak of it again later."

"And I am no longer foolish enough, monsieur, to be

content with so vague a promise as that, and to wait for you forever."

"Do as you please, little one, and if you are in so great a hurry, go ahead."

"But what prejudice have you against marriage, after all? Why need it make any change in your life? You will have made a poor girl, who loves you, happy, that's all."

"What change will it make in my life, Scozzone?" said Benvenuto gravely. "You see yonder candle, whose pale flame but feebly lights this great room where we are: I place an extinguisher over it, and now it is quite dark. Marriage would do the same to my life. Light the candle again, Scozzone: I detest the darkness."

"I understand," cried Scozzone volubly, bursting into tears, "you bear too illustrious a name to give to a poor girl, a nobody, who has given you her heart and her life, all that she had to give, and is ready to suffer everything for you, who lives only in your life, who loves only you —"

"I know it, Scozzone, and I assure you that I am as grateful as possible."

"Who has gladly done her best to enliven your solitude, who, knowing your jealous disposition, never looks at the cavalcades of handsome archers and sergeants, who has always closed her ears to the soft words which she has not failed to hear, nevertheless, even here."

"Even here?" rejoined Benvenuto.

"Yes, here, even here, do you understand?"

"Scozzone," cried Benvenuto, "it's not one of my comrades, I trust, who has dared so to insult his master!"

"He would marry me if I would let him," continued Scozzone, attributing Cellini's wrath to a rejuvenescence of his love for her.

"Scozzone, tell me the insolent varlet's name. It's not Ascanio, I hope."

"There is a man who has said to me more than a hundred times, 'Catherine, the master abuses you; he will never marry you, sweet and pretty as you are; he is too proud for that. Oh! if he loved you as I love you, or if you would love me as you love him!'"

"Give me his name, the traitor's name!" cried Benvenuto.

"But I simply would not listen to him," continued Scozzone, enchanted at the success of her stratagem; "on the contrary, all his soft words were wasted, and I threatened to tell you all if he kept on. I loved only you. I was blind, and the gallant got nothing by his fine speeches and his languishing looks. Oh, put on your indifferent air, and pretend not to believe me! it is all true, none the less."

"I do not believe you, Scozzone," said Benvenuto, who saw that, if he desired to know his rival's name, he must employ a very different method from any he had hitherto attempted.

"What, you don't believe me?"

"No."

"You think that I am lying?"

"I think that you are mistaken."

"In your opinion, then, it's not possible for any one to love me?"

"I don't say that."

"But you think it?"

Benvenuto smiled, for he saw that he had found a way to make Catherine speak.

"But there is some one who loves me, and that's the truth," continued Scozzone.

Benvenuto made another gesture indicating incredulity.

"He loves me more than you ever loved me, more than you ever will love me, monsieur, do you understand?"

Benvenuto began to laugh heartily.

"I am very curious to know who this gallant Médor is," he said.

"His name is not Médor," retorted Catherine.

"What then, — Amadis?"

"Nor Amadis. His name is —"

"Galaor?"

"His name is Pagolo, if you must know."

"Aha! so it's Monsieur Pagolo!" muttered Cellini.

"Yes, it's Monsieur Pagolo," rejoined Scozzone, wounded by the contemptuous tone in which Cellini uttered his rival's name, — "a boy of good family, sedate, quiet, devout, and who would make a most excellent husband."

"Is that your opinion, Scozzone?"

"Yes, it is my opinion."

"And yet you have never given him any hope?"

"I have never listened to him. Oh! I was a great fool! But after this —"

"You are right, Scozzone; you should listen to him, and reply to him."

"How so? What's that you say?"

"I bid you listen when he speaks to you of love, and not turn him away. I will attend to the rest."

"But —"

"But, never fear, I have my plan."

"*A la bonne heure.* But I hope you don't propose to punish him very severely, poor devil; he acts as if he were confessing his sins when he says, 'I love you.' Play him a trick, if you choose, but not with your sword. I ask mercy for him."

"You will be content with my vengeance, Scozzone, for it will turn to your advantage."

"In what way?"

"It will help to gratify one of your fondest desires."

"What do you mean, Benvenuto?"

"That is my secret."

"Oh, if you knew what an absurd figure he cuts when he tries to be tender!" said the volatile creature, incapable of remaining sad five minutes in succession. "And so, naughty man, you are still interested to know whether any one is paying court to your giddy girl? You do still love poor Scozzone a little?"

"Yes. But do not fail to follow the instructions I give you in regard to Pagolo to the letter."

"Oh, don't be afraid! I can play a part as well as another. It won't be long before he will say to me, 'Catherine, are you still cruel?' and I will reply, 'What! again, Monsieur Pagolo?' But in a not very indignant tone, you understand, — encouraging rather. When he sees that I am no longer harsh, he will think he's conquered the world. But what shall you do to him, Benvenuto? When shall you begin to take your revenge upon him? Will it be long drawn out, and very amusing? Shall we laugh?"

"Yes, we shall laugh," Benvenuto replied.

"And you will always love me?"

Benvenuto imprinted an assenting kiss upon her forehead, — the best of all answers, since it answers for everything without answering for anything.

Poor Scozzone did not suspect that Cellini's kiss was the beginning of his vengeance.

The Vicomte de Marmagne's wish that he might find Benvenuto alone was also gratified. This is how it came about.

Spurred on by the provost's anger, goaded by the memory of Madame d'Etampes's disdain, and influenced

above all by his inordinate avarice, the viscount, having resolved to attack the lion in his den with the aid of his two sbirri, selected for his enterprise Saint Eloy's day, when the studio was likely to be deserted, as it was a holiday in the goldsmith's guild. He was proceeding along the quay, with his head high, and his heart beating fast, his two bravos walking ten steps behind him.

"Well, well!" said a voice at his side: "here's a fine young gentleman on amorous conquest bent, with his valorous bearing for the lady, and his two sbirri for the husband."

Marmagne turned, thinking that some one of his friends was speaking to him, but he saw only a stranger who was going in the same direction as himself, but whom in his absorption he had failed to observe.

"I'll wager that I have guessed the truth, my fair sir," continued the stranger. "I will bet my purse against yours, without knowing what it contains, that you are out on some such errand. Oh, tell me nothing! it's one's duty to be circumspect in love. My own name is Jacques Aubry; my profession, student; and I am on my way at present to an appointment with my sweetheart, Gervaise Philipot, a pretty girl, but, between ourselves, of appalling virtue, which suffered shipwreck, however, upon a certain ring. To be sure the ring was a jewel, and a jewel of marvellous workmanship, nothing less than one of Benvenuto Cellini's own!"

Until then the Vicomte de Marmagne had hardly listened to the confidences of his loquacious interlocutor, and had been careful not to reply. But his interest was aroused by the name of Benvenuto Cellini.

"One of Benvenuto Cellini's carvings! The devil! That's a royal gift for a student to make!"

"Oh! pray understand, my dear baron — Are you baron, count, or viscount?"

"Viscount," said Marmagne, biting his lips at the impertinent familiarity with which the student assumed to address him, but anxious to find out if he could not procure some valuable information from him.

"Pray understand, my dear viscount, that I did not buy it. No, although I'm an artist in my way, I don't put my money into such trifles. Benvenuto himself gave it to me in acknowledgment of my lending him a hand last Sunday to take the Grand-Nesle from the provost."

"Then you are Cellini's friend?" Marmagne inquired.

"His most intimate friend, viscount, and I glory in it. Between ourselves it's a friendship for life and death. Doubtless you also know him?"

"Yes."

"You are very fortunate. A sublime genius, is he not, my dear fellow? Pardon me: I say, 'my dear fellow,' but it's simply my way of speaking; besides I think that I am nobly born, too, — at least my mother used to tell my father so whenever he beat her. However, I am, as I told you, the admirer, the confidant, the brother of the great Benvenuto Cellini, and consequently a friend to his friends, and a foe to his foes; for my sublime goldsmith does n't lack foes. In the first place Madame d'Etampes, secondly, the Provost of Paris, the old villain, and thirdly, a certain Vicomte de Marmagne, a great, lanky creature, whom you perhaps know, and who proposes, so they say, to take possession of the Grand-Nesle. Pardieu! he'll have a warm reception!"

"Benvenuto has heard of his claim, has he?" queried Marmagne, beginning to take a very decided interest in the student's conversation.

"He has been warned; but — Hold! I must not tell

you, so that the aforesaid Marmagne may receive the chastisement he deserves."

"From what you say I judge that Benvenuto is on his guard?"

"On his guard? why, Benvenuto is always on his guard. He has come within an ace of being assassinated, I don't know how many times; but, thank God, he has always come safely out of it!"

"What do you mean by on his guard?"

"Oh! I don't mean that he has a garrison, as that old poltroon of a provost had; no, no, quite the contrary. Indeed, he is entirely alone at this moment as all the fellows have gone to Vanvres for a holiday. I was to go myself, and play a game of tennis with him, dear Benvenuto. Unluckily Gervaise's convenience conflicted with the great artist's, and naturally, as you will agree, I gave the preference to Gervaise."

"In that case I will take your place with Benvenuto," said Marmagne.

"Do so; it will be a meritorious action on your part; go, my dear viscount, and say to Benvenuto from me that he will see me this evening. Three knocks, rather loud, is the signal, you know. He adopted that precaution on account of that great oaf of a Marmagne, who is likely, so he imagines, to try to play him some scurvy trick. Do you know this Vicomte de Marmagne?"

"No."

"Ah! so much the worse! You might have described him to me."

"What for?"

"So that I might suggest a little game with clubs to him, if I should fall in with him. I don't know why it is, but although I never saw him, do you know I particularly detest your Marmagne, my dear fellow, and if he

ever falls in my way, I propose to pummel him in fine shape. But pardon me : here we are at the Augustins, and I am compelled to leave you. By the way, what is your name, my friend ?”

The viscount walked away as if he did not hear the question.

“Aha !” said Jacques Aubry, “it seems that we prefer to remain *incog* ; that’s the purest chivalry, or I don’t know myself. As you please, my dear viscount, as you please.”

And Jacques Aubry thrust his hands in his pockets and strutted down Rue de Battoir, at the end of which Gervaise lived, whistling a student’s song.

The Vicomte de Marmagne continued his journey toward the Grand-Nesle.

Benvenuto was in fact alone, as Jacques Aubry had said ; Ascanio had wandered away, I know not where, to dream ; Catherine had gone with Ruperta to visit one of her friends, and all the workmen and apprentices were holiday making at Vanvres.

The master was in the garden working at the clay model of his gigantic statue of Mars, whose colossal head could see the Louvre over the roofs of the Grand-Nesle, when little Jehan, who was on guard at the door for the day, deceived by Marmagne’s manner of knocking, took him for a friend, and admitted him with his two sbirri.

If Benvenuto did not, like Titian, work with his coat of mail upon his back, he did, like Salvator Rosa, work with his sword at his side, and his carbine within reach of his hand. Marmagne therefore quickly discovered that he had gained very little by surprising him ; he had simply surprised an armed man.

The viscount did not even try to dissemble his bravado born of poltroonery ; and when Cellini, in an imperative

tone which called for an immediate reply, demanded why he had come upon his premises, —

“I have no business with you,” was his answer ; “I am the Vicomte de Marmagne ; I am the king’s secretary, and here is an order from his Majesty,” he added, holding a paper above his head, “which allots a portion of the Grand-Nesle to me ; I am here to make provision for arranging to my taste that portion of the hotel which is allotted to me, and which I shall occupy henceforth.”

With that, Marmagne, still followed by his two sbirri, stalked toward the door of the château.

Benvenuto seized his carbine, which was, as we have said, within his reach, and with one bound stood in front of the door on the stoop.

“Halt where you are !” he cried in a terrible voice, stretching out his right arm in Marmagne’s direction ; “one step more, and you’re a dead man !”

The viscount at once stopped short, although after these preliminaries we might perhaps have anticipated a desperate conflict.

But there are men to whom is given the power to strike terror to other men’s hearts. There is an indescribable something in their look, their gestures, their attitude, as in the look, the gestures, and the attitude of the lion. The air about them is instinct with awe ; their power is felt afar off. When they stamp upon the ground, clench their fists, knit their brows, or inflate their nostrils, the boldest hesitate to attack them. A wild beast, whose young are attacked, has but to bristle up and breathe noisily to make the assailant tremble. The men of whom we speak are living dangers. Valiant hearts recognize their like in them, and go straight forward to meet them, despite their secret emotion. But the weak, the timid, the cowardly, recoil at sight of them.

Now Marmagne, as the reader has discovered, was not a valiant heart, and Benvenuto had all the appearance of a living danger.

And so when the viscount heard the redoubtable goldsmith's voice, and observed the imperial gesture of the arm extended toward him, he realized that death for himself and his two sbirri lay dormant in the carbine, the sword, and the dagger with which he was armed.

Furthermore, little Jehan, seeing that his master was threatened, had armed himself with a pike.

Marmagne felt that his game was up, and that he would be only too fortunate if he could extricate himself safe and sound from the wasps' nest he had stumbled upon.

"It's all right! it's all right! Messire Goldsmith," he said. "All that we wanted was to know whether you were or were not disposed to obey his Majesty's orders. You scoff at them, and refuse to abide by them! Very good! We shall apply to some one who will find a way to compel their execution. But do not hope that we shall do ourselves the honor of bargaining with you. *Bonsoir!*"

"*Bonsoir!*" said Benvenuto, with his hearty laugh. "Jehan, show these gentlemen out."

The viscount and his two sbirri shamefacedly retreated from the Grand-Nesle, cowed by one man, and shown out by a mere boy.

Such was the lamentable result of the fulfilment of the viscount's wish: "If only I could find Benvenuto alone!"

As he had been even more cruelly treated by fate in the matter of his desires than Jacques Aubry and Scozzone, who did not even yet detect the irony of destiny, our valorous viscount was furious.

"Madame d'Etampes was right," he said to himself,

“and I am fain to follow the advice she gave me ; I must break my sword and sharpen my dagger. This devil of a man is just what he is said to be, very intolerant, and not at all agreeable. I saw it written plainly enough in his eyes, that if I took another step I was a dead man ; but in every lost cause there is a possibility of revenge. Look well to yourself, Master Benvenuto ! look well to yourself !”

He proceeded to lay the blame upon his companions, who were tried men, however, and would have asked nothing better than to earn their money honestly, by slaying or being themselves slain : in retiring, they had simply obeyed their master's orders. They promised to give a better account of themselves in an ambuscade ; but as Marmagne, to shield his own honor, claimed that the check he had met with was due to them, he informed them that he did not propose to accompany them in their next undertaking, and that they must go through with it alone as best they could. It was the very thing they most desired.

Having enjoined silence upon them concerning their recent experience, he called upon the Provost of Paris, and informed him that he had concluded that the surest way to avoid all suspicion was to postpone Benvenuto's punishment until some day when, as frequently happened, he ventured into a lonely, deserted street with a considerable sum of money, or some valuable piece of his handiwork. Then it would be believed that he had been murdered by robbers.

It now remains for us to see how the wishes of Madame d'Etampes, Aseanio, and Cellini were gratified to their increased sorrow.

XVI.

A COURT.

MEANWHILE Ascanio had completed the design for his lily, and, perhaps from mere curiosity, perhaps under the influence of the magnet which attracts the wretched to those who sympathize with them, he at once repaired to the Hôtel d'Etampes. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon, and just at that hour the duchess was sitting upon her throne, surrounded by a veritable court; but similar orders to those which were given at the Louvre relating to Benvenuto, were given at the Hôtel d'Etampes for Ascanio. He was therefore at once escorted to a reception-room, and his arrival was made known to the duchess.

She trembled with joy at the thought that the young man was about to see her in all her splendor, and gave certain orders in a low tone to Isabeau, who had brought her the message. Isabeau returned to Ascanio, took him by the hand without a word, led him into a corridor, raised a heavy curtain, and gently pushed him forward. He found himself in the duchess's salon, immediately behind the arm-chair of the sovereign of the mansion, who guessed his presence more by the thrill which ran through her whole being than by the rustling of the curtain, and gave him her fair hand to kiss over her shoulder, which his lips almost touched in the position in which he stood.

The lovely duchess was, as we have said, surrounded by a veritable court. At her right was seated the Duke

of Medina-Sidonia, ambassador of Charles V.; Monsieur de Montbrion, governor of Charles d'Orléans, the king's second son, was at her left; the rest of the company sat in a circle at her feet.

With the leading personages of the kingdom — warriors, statesmen, magistrates, artists, — were assembled the leaders of the Protestant sect, which Madame d'Etampes secretly favored; great nobles all, and much courted, who had constituted themselves courtiers of the favorite. It was a gorgeous throng, and dazzling to the eyes at first sight. The conversation was enlivened with satirical remarks of all sorts concerning Diane de Poitiers, mistress of the Dauphin, and the bitter enemy of Madame d'Etampes. But Anne took no part in this petty warfare of quips and cranks, save by a word or two thrown in at random now and then, as, "Softly, messieurs, softly! no abuse of Madame Diane, or Endymion will be angry!" or, "Poor Madame Diane! she was married the day I was born!"

Except for these sparks with which she lighted up the conversation, Madame d'Etampes hardly spoke to anybody beside her two neighbors. She talked with them in undertones, but with great animation, and not so low that Ascanio, who was humble and abashed among so many great men, could not hear her.

"Yes, Monsieur de Montbrion," said she confidentially to her left-hand neighbor, "we must make an admirable prince of your pupil; he is the real king of the future, you know. I am ambitious for the dear child, and I am engaged at this moment in carving out an independent sovereignty for him in case God should take his father from us. Henri II., a poor creature, between ourselves, will be King of France; so be it. Our king will be a French king, and we will leave Madame Diane and Paris

to his elder brother. But we will take with us, with our Charles, the heart of Paris. The court will be where I am, Monsieur de Montbrion; I shall displace the sun. We shall have great painters like Primaticcio, charming poets like Clement Marot, who is fidgeting about yonder in his corner without speaking, a sure proof that he would like an opportunity to repeat some verses to us. All these people are at heart more vain than selfish, and more thirsty for glory than for money. Not he who has the greatest wealth, but he who will flatter them most freely, will have them on his side. And he who has them will be always great, for they will shed lustre upon any place upon which their rays fall. The Dauphin cares for naught but jousting! Oh, well! let him keep the lances and swords, and we will take the pens and the brushes with us. Never fear, Monsieur de Montbrion, I will never allow myself to be put down by Madame Diane, the queen in expectancy. Let her wait patiently till time and chance give her her kingdom. I shall have made one for myself twice over meanwhile. What say you to the Duchy of Milan? There you will not be very far from your friends at Geneva; for I know that you are not altogether indifferent to the new doctrine blown over from Germany. Hush! we will speak of this again, and I will tell you things that will surprise you. Why has Madame Diane assumed to set herself up as protectress of the Catholics? She protects, I protest; that's the difference between us."

With an imperative gesture and a meaning glance, Madame d'Etampes brought her confidences upon this subject to a close, leaving the governor of Charles d'Orléans sadly bewildered. He was on the point of replying, nevertheless, but found that the duchess had already turned to the Duke of Medina-Sidonia.

We have said that Ascanio could hear all.

"Well, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur," so Madame d'Etampes began, "does the Emperor finally conclude to pass through France? He can hardly do otherwise, to tell the truth, and a net on land is always preferable to a yawning gulf at sea. His cousin Henry VIII. would have no scruples about kidnapping him, and if he escaped the English he would fall into the hands of the Turk. By land the three Protestant princes would oppose his passage. What can he do? He must either proceed through France, or else — cruel sacrifice! — forego the chastisement of the rebels of Ghent, his dear compatriots. For our great Emperor Charles is a good burgher of Ghent. That is very evident in the slight respect which he has shown on occasion for Royal Majesty. Memories of that sort are what make him so timid and circumspect to-day, Monsieur de Medina. Oh, we understand it all! He fears that the King of France will avenge the prisoner in Spain, and that the prisoner at Paris may pay the balance of the ransom due from the prisoner of the Escorial. O mon Dieu! let his mind be at ease; even if he does not comprehend our chivalrous loyalty, he has heard of it, I trust."

"Most assuredly, Madame la Duchesse," said the ambassador, "we know the loyalty of François I. when left to his own devices, but we fear —"

The duke paused.

"You fear his advisers, do you not?" rejoined the duchess. "Yes, yes! Oh, I know very well that advice from a pretty mouth, advice which should take a clever and satirical form, would never fail of influence upon a king's mind. It is your duty to think of that, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, and take your precautions accordingly. After all, you must have full powers, or, if not full powers, a little paper signed in blank, wherein a good many

things can be inserted in a few words. We know how it's done. We have studied diplomacy ; indeed, I once asked the king to make me an ambassador, for I believe that I have a decided talent for negotiation. Yes, I am sure that it would be very painful for Charles V. to give up a slice of his empire in order to obtain his release, or to assure his inviolability. On the other hand, Flanders is one of the fairest jewels of his crown ; it is the inheritance of his mother, Marie de Bourgogne, and it is hard to renounce the patrimony of one's ancestors with a stroke of the pen, especially when that patrimony is a great duchy, which may well be transformed into a little monarchy. But what am I saying, *mon Dieu* ! I, who have a perfect horror of politics, for it is universally agreed that politics and women do not go well together. To be sure, I let fall a word or two thoughtlessly now and then on affairs of state, but if his Majesty presses me and insists upon my expressing my thoughts more fully, I beg him to spare me such tiresome discussions, and sometimes I run away and leave him alone to dream upon them. You, clever diplomatist that you are, and who know mankind so well, will tell me that these words tossed into the air are just the ones which take root in minds like the king's, and that such words, which are supposed to have been blown away by the wind, almost always have more weight than a long harangue which is not listened to. That may be, *Monsieur le Duc de Medina*, that may be, but I am only a poor woman, engrossed with ribbons and gewgaws, and you understand all these serious matters a thousand times better than I ; but the lion may have need of the ant, the skiff may save the ship. We are here to come to an understanding, *Monsieur le Duc*, and that's all we have to do."

"If you choose, madame," said the ambassador, "it will be very quickly done."

"Who gives to-day receives to-morrow," continued the duchess, evading a direct reply; "my womanly instinct will always lead me to advise François I. to perform great and generous deeds, but instinct often turns its back on reason. We must also think of our interest, of the interest of France, of course. But I have confidence in you, Monsieur de Medina; I will ask your advice, and upon the whole I think that the Emperor will do well to rely upon the king's word."

"Ah! if you were in our interest, madame, he would not hesitate."

"Master Clement Marot," said the duchess, abruptly breaking off the conversation, as if she had not heard the ambassador's last exclamation; "Master Clement Marot, do you not happen to have some flowing madrigal, or some stately sonnet to repeat to us?"

"Madame," said the poet, "sonnets and madrigals are natural flowers beneath your feet, and grow apace in the sunshine of your lovely eyes: half a score of lines have come to my mind simply from looking into them."

"Indeed, master! Very good! we will listen to them. Ah! Messire le Prévôt, welcome; pray forgive me for not seeing you at once. Have you news of your future son-in-law, our friend Comte d'Orbec?"

"Yes, madame," replied D'Estourville, "he writes that he is to hasten his return, and we shall soon see him, I trust."

A half suppressed sigh made Madame d'Etampes start, but she said, without turning toward its author:—

"He will be welcomed by us all. Well, Vicomte de Marmagne," she continued, "have you found the sheath of your dagger?"

"No, madame ; but I am on the trace of it, and I know how and where to find it now."

"Good luck to you then, Monsieur le Vicomte, good luck to you. Are you ready, Master Clement ? we are all ears."

"The subject is the duchy of Etampes," said Marot.

A murmur of approval ran through the room, and the poet recited the following lines in an affected voice :—

"Ce plaisant val que l'on nomme Tempé
Dont maiute histoire est encore embellie,
Arrosé d'eau, si doux, si attempé,
Sachez que plus il n'est en Thessalie ;
Jupiter, roi qui les cœurs gagne et lie,
L'a de Thessale en France remué,
Et quelque peu son propre nom mué,
Car pour Tempé veut qu'Etampes s'appelle,
Ainsi lui plait, ainsi l'a situé
Pour y loger de France la plus belle."¹

Madame d'Etampes clapped her hands and smiled, and all the hands and all the lips applauded after her.

"Faith !" said she, "I see that Jupiter transported Pindarus to France when he transported Tempe."

With that the duchess rose, and all the company followed suit. She was fully justified in deeming herself the veritable queen ; and it was a true queenly gesture with which she took leave of her guests, and it was as a queen that all saluted her as they withdrew.

¹ That lovely valley called the Vale of Tempe,
Whose refreshing shade doth many a tale adorn,
Watered by cool and limpid streamlets,
Is no more to be found in Thessaly :
For Jupiter, the king who conquers hearts and binds them,
Has bodily transported it from Thessaly to France,
And in a slight degree has changed its name :
For *Tempe* read *Etampes* ; such is his will,
And he hath so ordained, and placed it there,
That there might dwell she who is France's loveliest.

"Remain," she said in a low voice to Ascanio.

Ascanio obeyed.

But when all the others had left the room, it was no haughty and disdainful queen, but an humble and passionate woman, who turned and confronted the young artist.

Ascanio, born of humble parents, brought up far from the world, in the almost cloister-like twilight of the studio, and an unaccustomed guest in palaces, whither he had accompanied his master only on rare occasions, was already giddy, confused, dazzled by the light and noise and conversation. His mind was attacked by something very like vertigo when he heard Madame d'Etampes speak in such simple terms, or rather so coquettishly, of such grave subjects, and touch lightly in familiar phrase upon the destinies of kings and the dismemberment of kingdoms. The woman, like a very Providence, had in some sort distributed to each one his portion of joy or sorrow ; she had with the same hand rattled fetters and let crowns fall. And lo ! this sovereign of the loftiest earthly things, proud as Lucifer with her noble flatterers, turned to him not only with the soft glance of the loving woman, but with the suppliant air of the slave who fears. Ascanio had suddenly become the leading character in the play, instead of a simple spectator.

It should be said that the coquettish duchess had skilfully planned and brought about this effect. Ascanio was conscious of the empire which this woman assumed, despite his efforts to combat it, not over his heart, but over his mind ; and like the child that he was, he sought to hide his trouble beneath a cold, stern demeanor. It may perhaps be that he had seen his spotless Colombe pass like a ghost between the duchess and himself, — Colombe with her white robe and her luminous brow.

XVII.

LOVE AS PASSION.

"MADAME," said Ascanio, "you requested me to design a lily, do you remember? You ordered me to bring the design to you as soon as it should be completed. I completed it this morning, and I have it here."

"We have time enough, Ascanio," said the duchess, with a smile, and in a siren's voice. "Sit you down, pray. Well, my bonny invalid, what of your wound?"

"I am entirely recovered, madame."

"So far as your shoulder is concerned; but here?" said the duchess, laying her hand upon the young man's heart, with a graceful gesture, and a world of sentiment in her tone.

"I beg you, madame, to forget all that nonsense; I am very angry with myself for having annoyed your ladyship with it."

"O mon Dieu! what means this air of constraint? What means this clouded brow, and this harsh voice? All those men wearied you, did they not, Ascanio?—and as for myself, I hate and abhor them, but I fear them! Oh how I longed to be alone with you! Did you not see how quickly I dismissed them?"

"You are right, madame; I felt sadly out of place in such a distinguished company. I, a poor artist, who am here simply to show you this lily."

"Ah! mon Dieu! in a moment, Ascanio," continued the duchess, shaking her head; "you are very cold, and very sober with a friend. The other day you were so expansive and so delightful! Why this change, Ascanio? Doubtless some speech of your master's, who cannot endure me. How could you listen to him, Ascanio? Come, be frank; you have discussed me with him, have you not? and he told you that it was dangerous to trust me; that the friendly feeling I had manifested for you concealed some snare; he told you, did he not, that I detest you?"

"He told me that you loved me, madame," retorted Ascanio, looking earnestly into her face.

Madame d'Etampes was speechless for a moment, in presence of the thoughts which rushed through her mind. She wished without doubt that Ascanio should know her love, but she would have liked time to prepare him for it, and to extinguish gradually, without seeming interested in so doing, his passion for Colombe. Now that the ambuscade she had arranged was discovered, she must fight her battle in the broad daylight, and win the victory openly if at all. She made her decision in a second.

"Well, yes," said she, "I do love you. Is it a crime? Is it a sin even? Can one command one's love or hatred? You should never have known that I love you. For why tell you, when you love another? But that man revealed the whole truth, he laid bare my heart to you, and he did well, Ascanio. Look upon it, and you will see there adoration so deep that you can but be touched by it. And now, Ascanio, you must love me too, mark that."

Anne d'Etampes, a potent, superior nature, disdainful by instinct and ambitious from weariness of her surroundings, had had several lovers hitherto, but not one love.

She had fascinated the king, Admiral Brion had taken her by surprise, the Comte de Longueval caught her fancy for the moment, but throughout all these intrigues the head had always taken the place of the heart. At last, one day she found this young, true love, tender and deep, which she had so often summoned without avail, and now another woman disputed its possession with her. Ah ! so much the worse for that other woman ! She could not know what an irresistible passion she had to contend with. All the determination and all the violent impulses of her heart, she, Anne d'Etampes, would make manifest in her affection. That woman did not yet know what a fatal thing it would be to have the Duchesse d'Etampes for her rival, the Duchesse d'Etampes, who desired to have her Ascanio to herself, and whose power was such that she could, with a look, a word, a gesture, crush whatever might come between him and herself. The die was cast, the ambition and the beauty of the king's mistress were thenceforth to serve no other masters than her love for Ascanio and her jealousy of Colombe.

Poor Colombe, at that moment bending over her embroidery, sitting at her spinning-wheel, or kneeling before her *prie-Dieu* !

Ascanio, in presence of so outspoken and so redoubtable a passion, felt fascinated, carried away, and dismayed, all at the same moment. Benvenuto had said, and Ascanio now realized, that this was no mere whim ; but he was deficient, not in the strength to struggle, but in the experience which would have taught him to feign submission. He was hardly twenty years old, and was too candid to pretend ; he fancied, poor child, that the memory of Colombe, the name of the innocent girl uttered by him, would be an offensive and defensive

weapon, a sword and a shield, while on the other hand it was sure to drive the shaft still deeper into the heart of Madame d'Etampes, who perhaps would soon have grown weary of a love in which she had no rival and no battle to wage.

"Come, Ascanio," she resumed more calmly, seeing that the young man held his peace, alarmed perhaps by the words she had let fall, "let us for to-day forget my love, which an imprudent word of yours inopportunistly awakened. Let us think now of yourself only. Oh! I love you more on your own account than mine, I swear to you. I long to brighten your life as you have brightened mine. You are an orphan, take me for your mother. You heard what I said to Montbrion and Medina, and you may have thought that I am all ambition. 'Tis true, I am ambitious, but for you alone. How long is it since I conceived this project of creating an independent duchy in the heart of Italy for a son of France? Only since I have loved you. If I were queen there, who would be the veritable king? You. For you I would cause empire and kingdom to change places! Ah! Ascanio, you do not know me; you do not know what a woman I am. You see that I tell you the whole truth, I unfold my plans to you without reserve. Now do you, in your turn, confide in me, Ascanio. What are your wishes, that I may fulfil them! What are your passions, that I may minister to them!"

"Madame, I desire to be as frank and loyal as yourself, and to tell you the truth, as you have told it to me. I ask nothing, I wish nothing, I long for nothing, save Colombe's love."

"But she loves you not; you yourself told me so!"

"I was desperate the other day, true. But to-day who can say?" Ascanio lowered his eyes and his voice: "For you love me!" he added.

The duchess was taken aback by this instance of the instinctive divination of true love. There was a moment of silence, and that moment sufficed for her to collect her thoughts.

"Ascanio, let us not talk to-day of affairs of the heart," she said. "I made that request once before ; I make it again. Love isn't the whole of life to you men. For instance, have you never thirsted for wealth, honors, glory ?"

"Oh ! yes, yes ! for a month past I have most ardently longed for them," replied Ascanio, always reverting to the same idea in spite of himself.

Again there was a pause.

"Are you fond of Italy ?" Anne resumed with effort.

"Yes, madame," said Ascanio. "There are flowering orange groves there, beneath which it is so pleasant to wander and converse. There the bluest of blue skies surrounds, caresses, and adorns everything that is beautiful."

"Oh, to fly thither with you ! — to have you all to myself ! — to be all in all to you, as you would be all in all to me ! *Mon Dieu ! mon Dieu !*" cried the duchess, likewise yielding to the irresistible force of her love. But she at once recovered herself, fearing to frighten Ascanio again, and continued : "I thought that you loved art before everything."

"Before everything I love — to love !" said Ascanio. "Oh ! it is my great master Cellini, not I, who throws his whole being into his work. He is the great, the marvellous, the sublime artist ! I am a poor apprentice, nothing more. I came to France with him, not to acquire wealth, nor glory, but because I loved him, that's all, and it was impossible for me to part from him ; for at that time he was everything to me. I have no personal will, no strength independent of his strength. I became

a goldsmith to gratify him, and because he wished it, as I became a carver because of his enthusiasm for skilful and delicate carving."

"Very well," said the duchess, "now listen : to live in Italy, all-powerful, almost a king ; to patronize artists, Cellini at their head ; to give him bronze, and silver and gold, to carve and cast and mould ; and beyond all that, to love and be loved. Say, Ascanio, is it not a lovely dream ?"

"It would be Paradise, madame, if it were Colombe whom I loved and who loved me."

"Still Colombe, always Colombe !" cried the duchess. "So be it ; since the subject persistently forces itself into our words and our thoughts ; since your Colombe is here with us, constantly before your eyes, and constantly in your heart, let us speak of her and of myself frankly and without hypocrisy : she does not love you, and you know it full well."

"Oh, no ! I do not know it now, madame."

"But how can she love you when she is to marry another ?" cried the duchess.

"Her father forces her, perhaps."

"Her father forces her ! And do you think that if you loved me as you loved her, — do you think that if I were in her place there is in this wide world any force or will or power that could keep us apart ? Oh, I would leave everything, I would fly from everything, I would run to your arms, and would give you my love, my honor, and my life to guard ! No, no ! I say she does not love you. And now would you have me tell you something else ? you do not love her !"

"What ! I not love Colombe ! I think you said that I do not love her, madame ?"

"No, you do not love her. You deceive yourself. At

your age, one mistakes the need of loving for love. If you had seen me first, you would love me instead of her. Oh, when I think that you might have loved me! But no, no! it is much better that you should choose me in preference to her. I do not know this Colombe; she is lovely and pure, and whatever you choose; but these slips of girls know nothing about loving. Your Colombe would never have told you what I, whom you despise, have just said; she would have too much vanity, too much diffidence, too much shame perhaps. But my love is simple, and expresses itself in simple words. You despise me, you think that I forget my sex, and all because I don't dissemble. Some day, when you know the world better, when you have drunk so deeply of life that you have reached the dregs, — sorrow, — then you will think better of your present injustice, then you will admire me. But I do not choose to be admired, Ascanio, I choose to be loved. I say again, Ascanio, if I loved you less, I might be false, artful, coquettish; but I love you too well to try to fascinate you. I long to receive your heart as a gift, not to steal it. What will be the end of your love for that child? Tell me. You will suffer, my best beloved, and that's all. But I can serve you in many ways. In the first place, I have suffered for two, and perhaps God will permit my surplusage of suffering to be credited to you; and then I lay my wealth, my power, my experience, all at your feet. I will add my life to yours, and will save you from all sorts of missteps and from all forms of corruption. To arrive at fortune, or even to attain glory, an artist must often stoop to base, crawling expedients. You will be beyond all necessity for that with me. I will lift you ever higher and higher; I will be your stepping-stone. With me you will continue to be the proud, the noble, the pure Ascanio."

"But Coloube ! Colombe, madame ! Is not she too an immaculate pearl ?"

"My child, believe what I say," replied the duchess, relapsing from feverish exaltation to melancholy. "Your pure white, innocent Columbe will make your life monotonous and dreary. You are both too divine. God did n't make angels to be joined together, but to make bad people better."

The duchess's manner was so eloquent, and her voice so sincere, that Ascanio was conscious of a thrill of affectionate compassion stealing over him, in spite of himself.

"Alas ! madame," he said, "I see that I am indeed honored by your affection, and I am very deeply touched ; but it is even better to love !"

"Oh, how true ! how true that is ! I prefer your disdain to the king's softest words. Ah me ! I love for the first time : for the first time, I swear !"

"And the king ? pray do you not love him, madame ?"

"No, I am his mistress, but he is not my master."

"But he loves you !"

"Mon Dieu !" cried Anne, gazing earnestly into Ascanio's face, and seizing both his hands in hers : "Am I so fortunate that you are jealous ? Does the king's love offend you ? Listen : hitherto I have been in your eyes the duchess, wealthy, noble, powerful, offering to stir up crowned heads and overturn thrones. Do you prefer the poor, lonely woman, out of the world, with a simple white robe, and a wild flower in her hair ? Do you prefer that, Ascanio ? Let us leave Paris, the court, the world ! Let us take refuge in some far off nook in your sunny Italy, beneath the lofty pines of Rome, or on the shores of your lovely Bay of Naples. Here I am : I am ready. O Ascanio, Ascanio, does it really flatter your pride, that I would sacrifice a crowned lover for your sake ?"

“Madame,” said Ascanio, whose heart was beginning to melt in the flame of so great a passion, “madame, my heart is too proud and too exacting; you cannot give me the past.”

“The past! O you men, you men! always cruel! The past! In God’s name ought an unfortunate woman to be compelled to answer for her past, when it has almost always been made what it was by events and circumstances stronger than herself? Suppose that a storm should arise and a whirlwind carry you off to Italy; when you return, one year, two years, three years hence, should you take it ill of your Colombe, whom you love so dearly to-day, because she had obeyed her parents and married Comte d’Orbec? Would you make her virtue a subject of reproach? would you punish her for obeying one of God’s commandments? And if she had not your memory to feed upon, if she had never known you, — if, in her deathly ennui, crushed with grief, forgotten for a moment by God, she had sought to gain some knowledge of that paradise called love, the door of which was closed to her, — if she had loved another than her husband, whom she could not love, — if in a moment of delirium she had given her heart in exchange for another, — she would then be ruined in your eyes, dishonored in your heart. She could no longer hope to be blessed by your love, because she had not an unsullied past to give in exchange for your heart. Oh! I repeat, it is unjust, it is cruel!”

“Madame — ”

“Who told you that that is not my story? Listen to what I say, and believe what I declare to be the truth. I say again that I have suffered for both; and this poor woman, whom God forgives, you refuse to forgive. You do not understand how much greater and nobler it is to raise one’s self from the abyss after falling into it, than

to pass close by without seeing it, having the bandage of happiness over your eyes. O Ascanio, Ascanio! I deemed you better than the others, because you were younger, and fairer to look upon — ”

“ O madame ! ”

“ Reach me your hand, Ascanio, and at one bound I will spring from the bottom of the abyss to your heart. Will you? To-morrow I will have broken with the king, the court, the world. Oh, I am valiant in love! But I do not wish to make myself any greater than I am. It would be but a trifling sacrifice for me, believe me. All these men are not worth one glance from you. But, if you would trust to me, dear child, you would let me retain my authority, and continue my plans for you. I would make you great, and you men can do without love if you attain glory: you are ambitious, — you may not know it yet, but you are. As for the king’s love, don’t be alarmed about that: I will turn it aside upon some other to whom he will give his heart while I retain his mind. Choose, Ascanio. Powerful through my means and with me, or I humble through your means and with you. Look you: a short time since, as you know, I was in this chair, and the most powerful courtiers were at my feet. Sit you in my place: sit you there, and behold me at your feet. Oh, how I love to be here, Ascanio! oh what bliss to see you and look into your eyes! You turn pale, Ascanio! Oh, if you would but tell me that you would love me some day, though not for a long, a very long while! ”

“ Madame! madame! ” cried Ascanio, hiding his face in his hands, and covering eyes and ears, so conscious was he of the potent fascination of the aspect and the accent of the siren.

“ Do not call me madame, do not call me Anne, ” said

the duchess, putting aside his hands: "call me Louise. It is also my name, but a name by which no one has ever called me, and it shall be yours. Louise! Louise! — Do you not think it a sweet name, Ascanio?"

"I know one sweeter still," replied Ascanio.

"Beware, Ascanio!" cried the wounded lioness: "if you make me suffer too keenly, I may perhaps come to hate you as much as I love you."

"Mon Dieu!" replied the young man, shaking his head, as if to avert the spell: "Mon Dieu! you confuse my thoughts, and overwhelm my heart! Am I delirious? Have I a fever? Am I dreaming? If I say harsh things to you, forgive me, for I do it to awaken myself. I see you, lovely, adored, a queen, here at my feet. It cannot be that such temptations exist except to lead souls to perdition. Ah! you are, as you say, in an abyss; but instead of rising out of it yourself, you would draw me in. Oh, do not expose my weakness to such a trial!"

"There is neither temptation, nor trial, nor dream; there is a resplendent reality for us both: I love you, Ascanio, I love you!"

"You love me, but you will repent of your love hereafter and will reproach me some day for what you have brought into my life, or what I have taken away from yours."

"Ah! you do not know me," cried the duchess, "if you think me weak enough to repent. Stay: will you have a pledge?"

Anne hastily seated herself at a table upon which were writing materials, and, seizing a pen, dashed off a few words.

"Take this," she said, "and doubt me again, if you dare!"

Ascanio took the paper and read: —

"Ascanio, I love you: go with me where I go, or let me go with you where you go.

"ANNE D'HEILLY."

"Oh, that cannot be, madame! It seems to me that my love would be a cause of shame to you."

"Shame!" cried the duchess: "do I know shame? I am too proud for that. My pride is my virtue!"

"Ah! I know a lovelier and more saintly virtue than that," said Ascanio, clinging to the thought of Colombe with a desperate effort.

The blow struck home. The duchess rose, trembling with indignation.

"You are an obstinate, hard-hearted child, Ascanio," she said in a broken voice: "I would fain have spared you much suffering, but I see that sorrow alone can teach you what life is. You will come back to me, Ascanio; you will return wounded, bleeding, heart-broken, and you will know then the worth of your Colombe and of myself. I will forgive you then, because I love you; but ere that time comes terrible things will happen. *Au revoir.*"

And Madame d'Etampes, wild with love and hatred, left the room, forgetting that the two lines she had written in a moment of exaltation remained in Ascanio's hands.

XVIII.

LOVE AS A DREAM.

As soon as Ascanio was out of Madame d'Etampes's presence, the fascinating influence which emanated from her disappeared, and he could once more see clearly the condition of his own heart, as well as what was going on about him. Now, he recalled two things he had said. Colombe might love him, since the Duchesse d'Etampes loved him. Thenceforth his life did not belong to him: his instinct had served him well in suggesting these two thoughts to him, but it had led him astray when it inspired him to give utterance to them. If the honest, upright soul of the young man had been capable of descending to dissimulation, all would have been well, but he had simply put the wounded and much to be dreaded duchess on her guard. The struggle henceforth was to be the more terrible, in that Colombe only was threatened.

However, this passionate and perilous scene with the duchess was of service to Ascanio in one respect. He carried away from it a new-born feeling of exaltation and confidence. His mind, excited by the spectacle it had witnessed as well as by its own efforts, was more active than ever, and more inclined to audacious deeds; so that he gallantly determined to find out what basis there might be for his hopes, and to sound the depths of Colombe's heart, though he were to find nothing more

than indifference there. If Colombe really loved Comte d'Orbec, why contend longer against Madame d'Etampes? She might do what she would with a rebellious, despised, desolate, despairing existence. He would be ambitious, he would become gloomy and evil-minded; what matter if he did? But first of all he must put an end to his doubts, and go with a determined step to meet his fate. If worse came to worst, Madame d'Etampes's promise would take care of the future.

Ascanio arrived at this decision as he returned along the quay, watching the sun sink in a sea of flame behind the black, frowning Tour de Nesle. When he reached the hôtel, without delay or hesitation, he went first to put together a few jewels, then resolutely knocked four times at the door leading to the Petit-Nesle.

Dame Perrine chanced to be in the neighborhood. With astonishment, mingled with curiosity, she made haste to open the gate. But when she saw the apprentice, she felt called upon to assume a very frigid demeanor.

"Ah! is it you, Monsieur Ascanio? What do you wish?"

"I wish to show these jewels to Mademoiselle Colombe immediately, good Dame Perrine. Is she in the garden?"

"Yes, in her path. But wait, young man, wait for me!"

Ascanio, who had not forgotten the road, walked swiftly away without giving another thought to the governess.

"Let us see," said she, stopping to reflect. "I think my best course is not to join them, but to leave Colombe free to select her purchases and her gifts. It would not be becoming for me to be there, if, as is probable, she

puts something aside for me. I will arrive when she has completed her purchases, and then I should certainly be very ungrateful to refuse. That's what I'll do, stay here and not embarrass the dear, kind-hearted child."

It will be seen that the good woman was not deficient in delicacy.

For ten days past Colombe had not found it necessary to ask herself if Ascanio had become her dearest thought. The pure-souled, unsophisticated child did not know what love was, but her heart was overflowing with love. She told herself that she did wrong to indulge in such dreams, but she excused herself on the ground that she certainly should never see Ascanio again, and that she should not have the consolation of justifying herself in his eyes.

Upon this pretext she passed all her evenings upon the bench where he had sat beside her, and there she would talk to him, listen to him, and concentrate her whole soul upon the memory. And when the darkness came on, and Dame Perrine bade her retire, the lovely dreamer would return to the house with reluctant steps, and not until she was recalled to herself would she remember her father's commands, Comte d'Orbec, and the rapid flight of time. Her sleepless nights were hard to bear, but not sufficiently so to efface the charm of her visions of the evening.

On this evening, as usual, Colombe was living over again the delicious hour she had passed with Ascanio, when, happening to raise her eyes, she uttered a sharp cry.

He was standing before her, gazing at her in silence.

He found her changed, but lovelier than ever. Pallor and melancholy were most becoming to her ideally beautiful face. She seemed to belong still less to earth. And

so Ascanio, gazing admiringly upon her enhanced charms, was assailed once more by his former modest apprehensions, which Madame d'Etampes's passion had dissipated for a moment. How could this celestial creature ever love him?

The two lovely children, who had loved each other so long without a word, and who had already suffered so much, were at last face to face. They ought, no doubt to have traversed in an instant the space they had traversed step by step, and separately, in their dreams. They might now come to an understanding first of all, and then allow all their long pent-up emotion to find expression in an outburst of joy.

But they were both too timid for that, and although their emotion betrayed each to the other, their angel hearts did not come together until they had first made a detour.

Colombe, speechless and blushing, had risen to her feet by a sudden impulse. Ascanio, pale with the intensity of his emotion, repressed with a trembling hand the rapid beating of his heart.

They both began to speak at once: he to say, "Forgive me, mademoiselle, but you gave me leave to show you some jewels;" she to say, "I am glad to see that you are entirely recovered, Monsieur Ascanio."

They ceased speaking simultaneously, but nevertheless they had perfectly understood each other: and Ascanio, emboldened by the involuntary smile which the incident naturally brought to the maiden's lips, rejoined, with somewhat more assurance:—

"Are you so kind as to remember that I was wounded?"

"Indeed, yes; and Dame Perrine and I have been very anxious and astonished not to see you."

"I did not intend to come again."

"Why not, pray?"

At this decisive moment Ascanio was fain to lean against a tree for support, but in a moment he summoned all his strength and all his courage, and said breathlessly:—

"I may confess it now: I loved you!"

"And now?"

The question came from Colombe's lips almost without her knowledge: it would have put to flight all the doubts of an older hand than Ascanio, but it simply revived his hopes a little.

"Now, alas!" he continued, "I have measured the distance that lies between us, and I know that you are happily betrothed to a noble count."

"Happily!" interposed Colombe, with a bitter smile.

"What! you do not love the count! Great God! Pray tell me, is he not worthy of you?"

"He is rich and powerful, far above me: but you have seen him?"

"No, and I was afraid to inquire. Besides, I cannot say why, but I felt certain that he was young and attractive, and that he was agreeable to you."

"He is older than my father, and he frightens me," said Colombe, hiding her face in her hands with a gesture of abhorrence which she could not repress.

Ascanio, beside himself with joy, fell on his knees, with clasped hands, pale as death, his eyes half closed, but a sublime light shone out from beneath his eyelids, and a smile fit to rejoice God's heart played about his colorless lips.

"What is the matter, Ascanio?" said Colombe in alarm.

"What is the matter!" cried the young man, finding in the excess of his joy the audacity which sorrow first



gave him; "What is the matter! why, I love you, Colombe!"

"Ascanio! Ascanio!" murmured Colombe, in a tone that was half reproof, half pleasure, and it must be said, as soft as a confession of love.

But they understood each other; their hearts were united, and before they were conscious of it, their lips had followed suit.

"My friend," said Colombe, softly pushing Ascanio away.

They gazed into one another's faces in ecstasy: the two angels recognized each other at last. Life does not contain two such moments.

"And so," said Ascanio, "you do not love Comte d'Orbec: you are free to love me."

"My friend," said Colombe, in her sweet, grave voice, "no one save my father ever kissed me before, and he, alas! very rarely. I am an ignorant child, and I know nothing of life; but I know from the thrill which your kiss caused me that it is my duty henceforth to belong only to you or to Heaven. Yes, if it were otherwise, I am sure that it would be a crime! Your lips have consecrated me your *fiancée* and your wife, and though my father himself should say no, I would listen only to the voice of God, which says yes in my heart. Here is my hand, which is yours."

"Angels of paradise, hear her and envy me!" cried Ascanio.

Such ecstasy is not to be pictured or described. Let those who can remember, remember. It is impossible to put upon paper the words, the looks, the hand-pressures of these pure-hearted lovely children. Their spotless souls flowed together, as do the waters from two springs, without changing their nature or their color. Ascanio

did not sully with the shadow of an impure thought the chaste brow of his beloved; Colombe laid her head in perfect trust upon her lover's shoulder. Had the Virgin Mary looked down upon them from on high she would not have turned her head away.

When one begins to love, one is in haste to bring to the support of his love all that he can of his past, present, and future. As soon as they could speak calmly, Ascanio and Colombe described to each other all their sorrows, all their hopes, of the days just gone by. It was charming to both to find that each had the other's story to tell. They had suffered much, and they smiled upon each other as they remembered their suffering.

But when they came to speak of the future, then they became serious and sad. What had God in store for them for the morrow? According to all divine laws they were made for each other; but human prejudices would declare their union ill assorted, monstrous. What were they to do? How persuade Comte d'Orbec to renounce his wife? how persuade the Provost of Paris to give his daughter to an artisan?

"Alas! my friend," said Colombe, "I promised you that I would belong to you or to Heaven, — I see that it must be to Heaven.

"No," said Ascanio, "to me. Two children like ourselves cannot move the world alone; but I will speak to my dear master, Benvenuto Cellini. He is powerful, Colombe, and sees all things from a higher level! He acts on earth as God ordains in heaven, and whatever his will has undertaken he accomplishes. He will give you to me. I do not know how he will do it, but I am sure. He loves obstacles. He will speak to King François; he will persuade your father. The only thing he could not bring to pass you did without his interven-

tion, — you loved me. The rest ought to be very simple. You see that I believe in miracles now, my best beloved."

"Dear Ascanio, you hope and I hope. Would you like me also to try an experiment? There is a person whose influence over my father's mind is unbounded. Shall I not write to Madame d'Etampes?"

"Madame d'Etampes!" cried Ascanio. "Mon Dieu! I had forgotten her."

Thereupon he told her, simply and without affectation, how he had seen the duchess, how she had declared her love for him, and how, that very day, within an hour, she had pronounced herself the enemy of his beloved. But of what consequence was it? Benvenuto's task would be a little more difficult, that was all. One adversary more would not terrify him.

"My dear," said Colombe, "you have faith in your master, and I have faith in you; speak to Cellini as soon as possible, and let him decide our fate."

"To-morrow I will tell him everything. He loves me so well that he will understand me instantly. But what is it, my Colombe? How sad you are!"

Each sentence of Ascanio's narrative had made Colombe doubly conscious of her love for him by forcing the sharp sting of jealousy into her heart, and more than once she convulsively pressed Ascanio's hand, which she held in her own.

"Ascanio, Madame d'Etampes is very beautiful. She is beloved by a great king. Mon Dieu! did she make no impression upon your heart?"

"I love you!" said Ascanio.

"Wait here for me."

She returned a moment later with a beautiful fresh white lily.

"When you are working at that woman's lily of gold and jewels," said she, "glance sometimes at the simple lilies from your Colombe's garden."

With that she put her lips to the flower and handed it to the apprentice, as coquettishly as Madame d'Etampes herself could have done.

At that moment Dame Perrine appeared at the end of the path.

"Adieu and *au revoir!*" said Colombe, putting her hand to her lover's lips with a furtive, graceful gesture.

The governess approached them.

"Well, my child," she said to Colombe, "have you given the delinquent a good scolding, and selected your jewels?"

"Take this, Dame Perrine," said Ascanio, putting the box of trinkets in the good woman's hands still unopened; "Mademoiselle Colombe and I have decided that you shall yourself choose whatever suits you best, and I will come again to-morrow for the others."

With that he ran off with his joy, darting a farewell glance at Colombe, which told her all that he had to tell.

Colombe sat with her hands folded upon her breast as if to confine the happiness it contained, while Dame Perrine was making her choice among the marvels brought by Ascanio.

Alas! the poor child was very soon and very cruelly awakened from her sweet dreams.

A woman appeared, escorted by one of the provost's men.

"Monseigneur le Comte d'Orbec, who is to return day after to-morrow," said this woman, "places me at madame's service from to-day. I am familiar with the newest and prettiest styles, and I am commanded by

Monsieur le Comte and Messire le Prévôt to make for madame a magnificent brocade gown, as Madame la Duchesse d'Etampes is to present madame to the queen on the day of her Majesty's departure for Saint-Germain, four days hence."

After the scene we have described, the reader may imagine the despairing effect of this twofold news upon Colombe.

XIX.

LOVE AS AN IDEA.

THE next morning at daybreak Ascanio, resolved to place his destiny in his master's hands at once, repaired to the foundry where Cellini worked every morning. But as he was about to knock at the door of what the master called his cell, he heard Scozzone's voice. He supposed that she was posing, and he discreetly withdrew, to return a little later. Meanwhile he walked about the gardens of the Grand-Nesle, reflecting upon what he should say to Cellini, and what Cellini would probably say to him.

But Scozzone was not posing, — far from it. She had never before set foot in the cell, to which no one, to her great disappointment, was ever admitted. So it was that the master's wrath was terrible to behold, when, happening to turn his head, he saw Catherine behind him, with her great eyes open wider than ever. The imprudent damsel's desire to see found little to gratify it, after all. A few drawings upon the walls, a green curtain before the window, a statue of Hebe begun, and a collection of sculptor's utensils, comprised the whole contents of the room.

"What do you want, little serpent? Why have you come here? In God's name will you follow me to hell?" cried Benvenuto at sight of Catherine.

"Alas! master," said Scozzone, in her softest voice, "I assure you I am not a serpent. I confess that rather than part from you I would joyfully follow you to hell if necessary, and I come here because it is the only place where I can speak to you in secret."

"Very well! make haste! What have you to say to me?"

"O mon Dieu! Benvenuto," exclaimed Scozzone, spying the outlined statue, "what an admirable figure! It is your Hebe. I had no idea it was so far advanced; how lovely it is!"

"Is it not?" said Benvenuto.

"Ah, yes! very lovely, and I understand that you would not want me to pose for such a subject. But who is your model?" inquired Scozzone, anxiously. "I have not seen any woman go in or out."

"Hush! Come, my dear girl, you surely did not come here to talk of sculpture."

"No, master it's about our Pagolo. I did as you bade me, Benvenuto. He took advantage of your absence last evening to annoy me with his eternal love, and, as you commanded, I listened to him to the end."

"Aha! the traitor! What did he say to you?"

"Oh! it's enough to make one die with laughing, and I would have given anything in the world could you have been there. Please understand that, in order not to arouse suspicion, the hypocrite finished the clasp you had given him to make, while he was speaking to me, and the file that he held in his hand added not a little to the pathos of his speech."

"'Dear Catherine,' said he, 'I am dying for love of you; when will you take pity on my martyrdom? One word, I only ask for one word. Just see to what I expose myself for your sake! if I had not finished this

clasp, the master might suspect something, and if he suspected anything he would kill me without mercy; but I defy everything for your lovely eyes. *Jésu!* this accursed work doesn't advance at all. After all, Catherine, what good does it do you to love Benvenuto? He doesn't thank you for it; he is always indifferent to you. And I would love you with a love which would be so ardent and so circumspect at the same time! No one would discover it, you would never be compromised, and you could rely on my discretion, whatever might happen. Look you,' he added, made bold by my silence, 'I have already found a safe retreat, hidden from every eye, where I could take you without fear.' — Ha! ha! you would never guess the place the sly rascal had selected, Benvenuto. I give you a hundred, a thousand guesses; none but men with hang-dog looks, and eyes on the ground discover such out of the way corners. He proposed to quarter me, — where do you suppose? — in the head of your great statue of Mars. 'We can go up,' he said, 'with a ladder.' He assured me that there is a very pretty apartment there, out of every one's sight, and with a magnificent view of the surrounding country."

"Faith, it's not a bad idea," said Benvenuto, with a laugh; "and what reply did you make, Scozzone?"

"I replied with a great burst of laughter, which I could not keep back, and which sorely disappointed Mons. Pagolo. He undertook then to be very pathetic, to reproach me with having no heart, and with wishing to cause his death, and so forth, and so forth. All the time working away with hammer and file, he talked to me in that strain for a full half-hour, for he's a loquacious rascal when he gives his mind to it."

"What reply did you give him finally, Scozzone?"

"What reply? Just as you knocked at the door, and

he placed his clasp, finished at last, upon the table, I took his hand, and said to him very soberly, 'Pagolo, you have talked like a jewel!' That was why you found him looking so like an idiot when you came in."

"You were wrong, Scozzone; you should not have discouraged him so."

"You told me to listen to him and I listened. Do you think it's so very easy for me to listen to handsome boys? Suppose something should happen some fine day?"

"You should not only listen to him, my child, but you must give him an answer: it is indispensable to my plan. Speak to him at first without anger, then indulgently, and then encouragingly. When you have reached that point, I will tell you what else you must do."

"But that may have results you do not intend, do you know? At least you should be there."

"Never fear, Scozzone, I will appear at the right moment. You have only to rely upon me, and follow my instructions to the letter. Go now, little one, and leave me to my work."

Catherine tripped lightly away, laughing in pleased anticipation of the fine trick Cellini proposed to play upon Pagolo, of the nature of which, however, she could not form the least conception.

Benvenuto, when she had left him, did not resume his work, as he had said; he rushed to the window which looked obliquely upon the garden of the Petit-Nesle, and stood there in rapt contemplation. A knock at the door rudely aroused him from his reverie.

"Hail and tempest!" he cried in a rage, "who is there now? can I not be left in peace? Ten thousand devils!"

"Forgive me, master," said Ascanio's voice; "if I disturb you, I will go away."

"What! is it you, my child? No, no, surely not; you never disturb me. What is it, pray? what do you want with me?"

Benvenuto lost no time in opening the door for his beloved pupil.

"I interfere with your solitude and your work," said Ascanio.

"No, Ascanio, you are always welcome."

"Master, I have a secret to confide to you, a service to ask of you."

"Speak. Will you have my purse? do you need my arm or my thoughts?"

"I may have need of them all, dear master."

"So much the better! I am yours body and soul, Ascanio. I have a confession to make to you, too: yes, a confession, for although I have committed no sin, I think, still I shall have some remorse until I am absolved by you. But do you speak first."

"Very well, master. — But, great Heaven! what is that cast?" cried Ascanio, interrupting himself.

His eye had just fallen upon the statue of Hebe, and in the statue he recognized Colombe.

"It is Hebe," replied Benvenuto, with glistening eyes; "it is the goddess of youth. Do you think it beautiful, Ascanio?"

"Oh, wonderful! But those features: I know them, I cannot be mistaken!"

"Rash boy! Since you raise the veil half-way, I must needs snatch it away altogether, and so, after all, your confidence will come after mine. Sit down, Ascanio; you shall have my heart spread out before you like an open book. You need me, you say: I, too, need that you should hear me. I shall be relieved of a great weight when you know all."

Ascanio sat down, paler than the culprit about to listen to the reading of the death sentence.

"You are a Florentine, Ascanio, and I do not need to ask you if you know the story of Dante Alighieri. One day he saw a child named Beatrice passing along the street, and he loved her. The child died and he loved her still, for it was her soul that he loved and souls do not die; but he crowned her with a crown of stars, and placed her in paradise. That done, he set about analyzing human passions, sounding the depths of poetry and philosophy; and when, purified by suffering and contemplation, he reached the gates of heaven, where Virgil, that is, Wisdom, was to leave him, he was not obliged to stop for lack of a guide, because he found Beatrice, that is, Love, awaiting him on the threshold.

"Ascanio, I have my Beatrice, dead like the other, and adored as she was. This has been hitherto a secret between God and her and myself. I am weak to resist temptation; but my adoration for her has remained intact amid all the impure passions to which I have yielded. I had placed my light too high for corruption to reach it. The man plunged heedlessly into dissipation, the artist remained true to his mysterious betrothal; and if I have done anything creditable, Ascanio,—if inert matter, silver or clay, has been made to assume form and life under my fingers, if I have sometimes succeeded in imparting beauty to marble and life to bronze,—it has been because my resplendent vision has given me counsel, support, and instruction for twenty years past.

"But I know not how it is, Ascanio: perhaps there is a distinction between the poet and the goldsmith, between the moulder of ideas, and the moulder of gold. Dante dreams: I need to see. The name of Maria is all-sufficient to him; I must have before me the face of the

Madonna. We divine his creations; we touch mine. That perhaps is why my Beatrice was not enough, or rather was too much for me, a sculptor. Her mind was ever present with me, but I was compelled to seek the human form. The angelic woman who shed a bright light upon my life had been beautiful, most certainly, beautiful above all in the qualities of her heart, but she did not realize the type of undying beauty upon which my imagination dwelt. I found myself constrained therefore to seek elsewhere, to invent.

"Now, tell me this, Ascanio; do you think that, if my sculptor's ideal had presented itself to me living on this earth, and if I had bestowed a share of my admiration upon it, I should have been ungrateful and faithless to my poetic ideal? Do you think that my celestial apparition would in that case have ceased to visit me, that the angel would be jealous of the woman? Do you think it? I ask you the question, Ascanio, and you will know some day why I ask it of you rather than of another, — why I tremble as I await your reply, as if you were my Beatrice herself."

"Master," said Ascanio gravely and sadly, "I am too young to have an opinion upon such lofty subjects: I think, however, in my heart, that you are one of the chosen men whom God leads, and that what you find upon your path has been placed there by God, not by chance."

"That is really your belief, is it not, Ascanio? You are of opinion that the terrestrial angel, the realization of my longing, would be sent by God, and that the other celestial angel would not be angry at my desertion? In that case, I may venture to tell you that I have found my ideal, that it is living, that I can see it, and almost touch it. Ascanio, the model of all beauty, of all purity,

the type of infinite perfection to which we artists aspire, is near at hand, it breathes, and I can admire it every day. Ah! all that I have done hitherto is as nothing compared with what I will do. This Hebe, which you think beautiful, and which is, in very truth, my *chef-d'œuvre*, does not satisfy me as yet: my living dream stands beside its image, and seems to me a hundred times more glorious; but I will attain it! I will attain it! Ascanio, a thousand white statues, all of which resemble it, are already forming and rising in my brain. I see them, I feel their presence, and some day they will come forth.

"And now, Ascanio, would you like me to show you my lovely inspiration? it should be close by us. Every morning, when the sun rises, it shines upon me from below. Look."

Benvenuto drew the curtain aside from the window, and pointed to the garden of the Petit-Nesle.

In her leafy avenue Colombe was walking slowly along, her head resting upon her hand.

"How fair she is, is she not?" said Benvenuto ecstatically. "Phidias and old Michel-Angelo created nothing purer, and the ancients, if they equal, do not surpass that graceful young head. How beautiful she is!"

"Ah! yes, beautiful indeed!" murmured Ascanio, who had resumed his seat, without strength to move or to think.

There was a moment's pause, while Benvenuto feasted upon his joy, and Ascanio brooded over his pain.

"But, master," the apprentice timidly ventured to say, "where will this artist's passion lead you? What do you mean to do?"

"Ascanio," replied Cellini, "she who is dead is not and cannot be mine. God simply showed her to me,

and did not implant any human love for her in my heart. Strangely enough, he did not even lead me to feel what she was to me until he had taken her from the world. She is naught but a memory in my life, a vague, indistinct image. But if you have understood me, Colombe more nearly touches my existence, my heart: I dare to love her: I dare to say to myself, 'She shall be mine!'

"She is the daughter of the Provost of Paris," said Ascanio, trembling.

"And even if she were a king's daughter, Ascanio, you know what my will is capable of. I have attained whatever object I have sought to attain, and I never longed for aught more ardently. I know not as yet by what means I shall gain my end, but she must be my wife."

"Your wife! Colombe your wife!"

"I will apply to my mighty sovereign," continued Benvenuto. "I will people the Louvre and Chambord with statues if he wishes. I will cover his tables with ewers and candelabra, and when I ask no other price than Colombe he will not be François I. if he refuses. O Ascanio, I am hopeful, I am hopeful! I will seek him in the midst of his whole court. See, three days hence, when he starts for Saint-Germain, you will come with me. We will carry the silver salt-box, which is completed, and the designs for a gateway at Fontainebleau. Every one will admire them, for they are fine, and he will admire them, and will marvel more than the others. I will give him a similar surprise every week. I have never been conscious of a more fruitful creative power. My brain is boiling night and day: this love of mine, Ascanio, has increased my power and renewed my youth. When François sees all his wishes gratified as soon as they are formed, — ah! then I will no longer request, but demand. He will make me great, and I will

make myself rich, and the Provost of Paris, for all his provostship, will be honored by the alliance. Upon my soul, Ascanio, I am going mad! Such thoughts make me lose control of myself. She mine! Dreams of heaven! Do you realize what it means, Ascanio? Colombe mine! Embrace me, my child; since I have confessed it all to you, I dare to listen to my hopes. My heart is calmer now; you have in a measure legalized my happiness. You will understand some day what I mean by that. Meanwhile, it seems to me that I love you more dearly since you have received my confidence: it was good of you to listen. Embrace me, dear Ascanio!"

"But you do not seem to think, master, that perhaps she does n't love you."

"Oh, hush, Ascanio! I have thought of it, and then I have envied your youth and beauty. But what you say of the far-seeing designs of God reassures me. She is waiting for me to come to her. Whom should she love? some courtier fop, altogether unworthy of her! Furthermore, whoever he may be for whom she is destined, I am as nobly born as he, and I have more genius."

"Comte d'Orbec, they say, is her *fiancé*."

"Comte d'Orbec? so much the better! I know him. He is the king's treasurer, and I go to him for the gold and silver to be used in my work, and for the sums which his Majesty's bounty allots to me. Comte d'Orbec is a crabbed, worn-out old curmudgeon! He does n't count, and there will be little glory in supplanting such an animal. Go to, Ascanio; it is I whom she will love, not for my sake, but for her own, because I shall be the demonstration of her loveliness, so to speak, because she will be appreciated, adored, immortalized. Moreover, I have said, 'I wish it!' and, I say again, I never have

used that phrase that I have not succeeded. There is no human power which can hold out against the energy of my passion. I shall, as always, go straight to my goal, with the inflexibility of destiny. She shall be mine, I tell you, though I have to turn the whole kingdom topsy-turvy. And if perchance any rival should block my way — Demonio! let him beware! You know me, Ascanio: I will kill him with this hand now grasping thine. But forgive me, Ascanio, in God's name! Ego-tist that I am, I forget that you have a secret to confide to me, and a service to ask at my hands. I shall never pay my debt to you, dear child, but say on, say on. For you, as well as myself, I can do what it is my will to do."

"You are wrong, master: there are things which God alone can do, and I know that I must rely upon Him and none other. I will leave my secret, therefore, between my feebleness and His might."

Ascanio left the room.

He had hardly closed the door when Cellini drew the green curtain, and, placing his table by the window, began to model his Hebe, his heart filled with joy in the present, and a sense of security for the future.





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